





ADELE DORING
OF THE
SUNNYSIDE CLUB



"Suppose we have a club."—Page 14.

ADELE DORING

OF THE

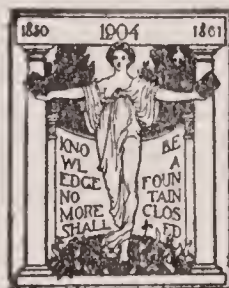
SUNNYSIDE CLUB

BY

GRACE MAY NORTH

FOUNDER AND EDITOR OF THE SUNNYSIDE
CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

ILLUSTRATED BY FLORENCE LILEY YOUNG



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ADELE DORING OF THE SUNNYSIDE CLUB

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Dedicated to

MARGARET EDNA ROCK

**AND TO ALL OTHER HAPPY-HEARTED GIRLS
FROM TEN TO FIFTEEN**

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ADELE DORING OF THE SUNNYSIDE CLUB

CHAPTER ONE

THE SUNNYSIDE CLUB

There was spring in the air,
Though the woods were still bare.
There was fragrance all about,
Though not a flower was out.
There were seven girls so gay
Off for a holiday.

ACROSS the April meadows they danced,
a long row, hand in hand. Another month
and the brown fields would be gold-and-
white with daisies and buttercups.

“Look! Look! The pussy-willows are
out!” Adele Doring called, as, with a shout
of glee, she darted ahead of the rest, to-
ward a bush which grew close to a low

stone wall and not far from a sparkling brook.

When the others came up, they caught hold of hands and danced about the bush while Adele sang:

“ ‘ Little Pussy-willow, harbinger of spring,
We are glad to welcome you, such good news
you bring.’ ”

“Adele,” drawled Rosamond Wright when they had paused for breath, “ I’m powerful worried about you, for fear you are going to grow up to be a poet or something queer like that.”

Adele laughed as she perched on the low stone wall and fanned herself with her broad-brimmed hat.

“No fear of *my* being a poet!” exclaimed Doris Drexel, as she and the other girls sat down on the warm brown grass. “Why I couldn’t even make ‘curl’ rhyme with ‘girl’ without being prompted.”

Then Adele, having put her hand in the pocket of her rose-colored sweater-coat,

gave a sudden exclamation as she drew out a piece of folded paper.

“Girls!” she cried. “Lend me your ears! I have a secret plan to reveal.”

“Aha!” quoth Bertha Angel. “So you had a sinister motive, as Bob says, for bringing us to this lonely, forsaken spot.”

“You were wise to do so, if it’s a secret,” Rosie declared, “for even the walls have ears.”

“Well, if this old stone wall wants to hear what I have to say,” laughed Adele, “it may listen and welcome.”

“Do hurry and tell us!” cried the impatient Betty Burd. “Your plans are always *such* jolly fun.”

“Well, then,” said Adele, mysteriously, “I’ve been reading a book.”

“But there is nothing remarkable about that,” Doris Drexel exclaimed. “You are almost *always* reading a book.”

Adele, not heeding the interruption, continued: “And in this book dwell several maidens of about our own age. They be-

long to a secret society and they have the best times ever. Now my plan is this. Since we seven girls are continually together, suppose we have a club."

"Wouldn't that be fun, though!" exclaimed Peggy Pierce. "I've always wanted to belong to one."

"I choose to be treasurer!" declared Betty Burd mischievously.

"Oh, Betty, *you* treasurer!" cried Doris Drexel in mock horror. "Then we never would know how our funds stood."

"Don't you have enough of mathematics in school, little one?" Adele asked with twinkling eyes.

"Don't I, though! Oh, girls!" Betty exclaimed dismayed. "I just know that you are all thinking of yesterday. Wasn't it terrible, when I was at the board doing that problem and those visiting ladies came in and said that they were interested in watching the progress made by the young. I was so scared that every figure looked like a Chinese character to me, and how I

did wish that a trap-door would open under my feet and let me gently down into the cellar. Luckily, Miss Donovan had no desire to be disgraced, and so she bade me take my seat and let Bertha do the problem."

"I hate math., too," Doris Drexel declared. "I'm like the little boy who said he could add the naughts all right but the figures bothered him."

"In truth," said Gertrude Willis, "there is just one of us who was born to be the treasurer of this club, and that one is Bertha Angel, — 'the only pupil in Seven B who can add and subtract with unvarying accuracy,' as Miss Donovan so recently remarked."

"Good!" cried Adele. "Bertha Angel, you are elected treasurer, but your duties will not be heavy, for at present there is no money to count."

"I accept the responsibility," said Bertha brightly, as she sprang up and made a bow.

“Now,” Adele inquired, “who would like to be secretary?”

“Secretary!” repeated Betty Burd blankly. “I thought that was a piece of furniture. My Uncle George has one in his study and it looks like a writing-desk.”

“So it is, fair maid,” drawled Rosamond Wright, “but didst thou never hear of one word having two meanings? The secretary which we want is a person to write down the clever things that we say and do.”

“I vote for Gertrude Willis,” called Doris Drexel. “Any one who could write such a composition as she read yesterday in assembly on the ‘Rights of the Indian’ surely ought to be recognized as a genius in our midst.”

“Thanks kindly,” laughed Gertrude; “I’ll do my little best.”

“Girls,” exclaimed Adele, “our club is now the happy possessor of a secretary and a treasurer, but it has neither a name nor a president!”

Peggy Pierce was on her feet in an in-

stant, exclaiming, "There is only one among us who could be our president, and she is"—"ADELE DORING!" the five others shouted in enthusiastic chorus.

"You see," laughed Peggy, as she resumed her seat, "the vote is unanimous."

Adele, rising, made a deep bow as she recited with mock gravity, "Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the honor which this day you have conferred upon me, and I hope that my future acts and deeds will in no way betray the confidence which you have placed in me."

"Oho!" Bertha Angel declared. "That speech was in last week's history lesson."

"I was hoping you'd all forgotten it," Adele laughingly replied, as she sat again on the low stone wall.

"Well, I had, you may be sure!" Betty Burd exclaimed. "But what is the club to be named?"

"I had an inspiration last night," said Adele, "so I wrote it down. I thought we might name the club after our beautiful

suburban town of Sunnyside, and then I wrote this rhyme as a sort of pledge for us all to sign:

“We promise to look on the Sunnyside
And be kind and cheerful each day;
To help the needy or lonely or sad,
Whom we happen to meet on our way.”

“Oh, Adele!” moaned Betty Burd in pretended dismay. “Why didn’t you tell us in the beginning that we had to be saints to belong to your club? If I should turn into a cherub too suddenly, my mamma dear wouldn’t know me.”

“Don’t worry about that,” laughed Adele. “We aren’t any of us in danger of sprouting wings just at present.” And then she added seriously, “But I do think that a club ought to stand for something more worth while than just fun and frolic. Of course we’ll have that, too; we always do.”

“You are right, Adele,” exclaimed Gertrude Willis warmly. “I think it is a beau-

tiful pledge, and I wish to be the first one to sign it."

Adele produced a stub of a pencil, and the paper went the rounds, each girl writing her name thereon.

"Now," said Adele, "only one thing remains to be decided upon, and that is, where we shall have our Secret Sanctum."

"Our which?" asked the irrepressible Betty Burd.

"A place where we may hold our secret meetings," Adele explained.

"You may use our attic if you wish," drawled Rosamond, "but, I warn you, it's powerful warm up there in the summer, and cobwebby."

"An attic is all right on rainy days," Adele replied, "but the blue sky is the roof for me, now that spring is here."

While she was talking, Adele's eyes were roving the meadow. Suddenly she saw something, and, leaping to the ground, she skipped about with delight, to the amazement of the others.

“Adele,” protested Peggy Pierce, “tell us, so we may dance, too.”

“Ohee!” sang out Adele, catching hold of Peggy and whirling her around. “I’ve just thought of the dan-di-est place for a Secret Sanctum, but I’m not going to tell until I find out if we may have it. Meet me Monday morning under the elm-tree and then I will tell you.”

So ended the first meeting of the Sunnyside Club, which was destined, in the months to come, to bring cheer and happiness into many lives.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SECRET SANCTUM

THE town of Sunnyside lay in a wide valley, beyond which were sloping hills, and among them, clear and blue, nestled Little Bear Lake.

To the south of the village there was a field which was so yellow in summer that it had been called Buttercup Meadows. Near it was a maple wood, and through the wood and across the field rippled a merry little brook.

Now, in the meadow and near the wood, and close to the laughing brook, stood a picturesque old log cabin. Years before, when the nearest town had been ten miles away, Adele Doring's grandfather had owned all of the land that one could see from the top of Lookout Hill, and in this log cabin his sheep-herders had lived.

The sheep and the herders had long since passed away, but the old log cabin was still standing, and Adele's father now owned it, and, too, he owned the Buttercup Meadows and the maple wood and the laughing brook and Lookout Hill.

It was that log cabin which Adele had seen on the day when the Sunnyside Club had been formed by the seven girls who were always together. They had been wondering where they could hold their meetings, when Adele had spied the log cabin, and she had thought at once that it would make an ideal Secret Sanctum, but she did not want to tell the others until she had asked her Giant Father's advice and consent.

The next morning, after breakfast, Adele revealed her plan. "May you have the log cabin, Heart's Desire?" her Giant Father asked with twinkling eyes. "Why, of course you may! Uncover yonder ink bottle and I will deed it to you this very moment."

“Oh, Daddy!” Adele laughingly exclaimed. “I don’t want to own it that way. I just want your permission and mother’s to do with it as I like.”

Mrs. Doring beamed on them both as she replied, “If your father is willing, daughter, then so am I.”

“Oh, you darlings!” Adele exclaimed, joyously hugging them. “Thank you so much.” Then catching up her hat and books, away she skipped to school.

The trysting-place was a big spreading elm-tree which stood in the middle of the girls’ side of the school-yard. Under it was a circular bench, and here the seven maidens waited each morning until all had gathered.

When Adele rounded the high hedge which bordered the school-grounds, she was greeted with a joyous chorus from the six who were already there.

“Three cheers for the president of the Sunnyside Club!” cried Betty Burd, the irrepressible.

“Hush! Hush!” laughed Adele, looking quickly about. “Don’t you remember that it is a secret society?”

“Luckily there is no one here but ourselves and the elm-tree,” Rosamond said.

“Adele!” Gertrude Willis exclaimed. “Why are your eyes so shining and bright? Have you good news to tell?”

“Indeed I have,” Adele replied gayly. “Just think, girls, we may have it!”

“Have what?” asked the puzzled six.

“O dear, how stupid of me!” laughed Adele. “Of course I hadn’t told you about it, had I? Well, you know that we wanted a place in which to hold our club-meetings, and I said I had thought of one if we might have it.” The six nodded eagerly.

“Well, then, we may, and it’s the loveliest, idealest place for a Secret Sanctum that ever could be thought of.”

“Oh, Adele, do tell us where it is,” begged Peggy Pierce. “I am ’most consumed with curiosity.”

“Well, then, I will end your suspense by

telling you that it is the log cabin over in Buttercup Meadows. It belongs to my dad, and he is glad to let us have it, and so is mumsie.”

“Ohee!” squealed Betty Burd. “How I do wish that there was no school to-day, so that we might go right over to look at our newest possession.”

“Let’s go at three!” exclaimed Adele; “that is, if our nice mothers do not need us after school.”

The mothers not only did not need them, but one and all were glad to have their daughters out of doors as much as possible in the pleasant spring weather, and so, as soon as the afternoon session was over, the seven maidens went hippety-skipping across the brown meadows.

Adele was armed with a good-sized key, which was rusty with age, but which proved that its days of usefulness were not over, for, when it was slipped in the padlock, it turned with a creak and the door swung open.

As first it was so dark within that they could see nothing, but soon their eyes, becoming accustomed to the dimness, noted several objects about.

“Oh, do look!” cried Doris Drexel in delight. “Here is rustic furniture which must have been made by the sheep-herders many years ago.”

“Can’t we get some light on the subject and a little air as well?” exclaimed Bertha Angel. “It’s stifling in here. Good! Here’s a window,” she added as she pulled a leather thong from a nail and threw back a rude wooden blind, thus uncovering a square opening, and through it came, not only a fresh breeze, but also the slanting rays of the afternoon sun.

“There! Now we can breathe,” said Adele, “and examine our possessions more closely.”

There was a rude bed-couch, a rustic table, and several three-legged stools. These were fashioned out of the trunks of small trees, with the bark still on them.

“Oh, but this will make an adorable Secret Sanctum,” exclaimed Betty Burd.

“Girls,” drawled the romantic Rosamond Wright, “if only this furniture could talk, what tales of sheep-herder’s life it could reveal!”

“The place is so musty and cobwebby,” said the practical Bertha, “we shall have to scrub every inch with warm soap-suds.”

“Oh, Burdie, how could you throw soapy water on my poetical dreams!” moaned Rosamond, who did not even like to hear a scrubbing-brush mentioned, much less entertain the idea of wielding one.

“Tut! Tut! My children!” Adele intervened. “Now all listen to me. You know the spring examinations are due in a few weeks, and we must study, study, *study*, and cram, cram, *cram*, so let’s forget that the cabin exists until next Saturday, and then let’s come out here with all the needed utensils, and, with Bertha to superintend the task, we will soon have the place as clean as a whistle.”

“Oh-h!” moaned Rosamond, and then she added mischievously, “I do believe that I’m going to be confined to my bed all day next Saturday with overstudyitis.”

“Don’t worry about that,” laughed Doris Drexel. “You may have overtattingitis, Rosie, but never overstudyitis.”

Rosamond had made yards and yards of tatting, which she said would some day adorn her wedding finery, and the other six often teased her about it, for, as yet, to them boys were playmates and brothers and nothing else.

Then Rosamond dramatically exclaimed: “Girls, I will not fail you in the hour of need. Armed with my mother’s best feather-duster, to be used on pianos only, I will be here Saturday next at the appointed hour.”

“Well, I’ll bring an extra scrubbing-brush, Rosie,” said Bertha teasingly.

“And let’s bring our lunches and stay all day if our nice mothers are willing,” Peggy Pierce remarked.

“That we will!” exclaimed the six. The door was again closed and the key hidden under a log which served as a step. Then, hand in hand, the Sunny Seven, as Adele called them, hippety-skipped homeward, chattering like magpies and laying wonderful plans for the adornment of their Secret Sanctum, which, in the summer to come, was to be the scene of many a jolly lark.

CHAPTER THREE

A JOLLY SCRUBBING-PARTY

The sky is always bluer,
And the songs of birds more gay,
And the meadow blossoms sweeter,
Upon a Saturday.
A week of lessons over,
And long golden hours for play.

SATURDAY dawned sunny and blue, and Adele was up at an early hour and down in the kitchen before Kate had set the water to boil.

“The top of the morning to you!” Adele called to the kindly Irish woman who had been cook in the Doring family since before Jack was born.

“And it’s you, Colleen,” said Kate, “and some merriness you’re planning, to be up this early.”

“Right you are!” the girl gayly replied. “I’m going to a picnic, and I want to borrow a mop and a scrubbing-brush and a pail and some rags.”

Kate held up her hands in pretended horror as she exclaimed, “And a picnic do you call it?”

“It truly is,” laughed Adele, “and I want some sandwiches and pickles and some of those darling little cakes which you made yesterday morning, and —”

“Take anything that you can find, Colleen,” said Kate, as she busied herself with breakfast preparations.

So Adele put up a bountiful lunch in a covered basket which she kept for the purpose. Jack, who was a year older than Adele, sauntered out into the kitchen and helped himself to one of the chocolate cupcakes as he exclaimed: “Say, Della, why don’t you ever ask us fellows to these picnics of yours? It isn’t fair for you girls to eat all the good things by yourselves.”

“Maybe we will some day,” Adele re-

plied. And then she added merrily, "But you wouldn't want to be asked to-day."

"I should say not," Kate began, "with brooms and mops and pails —" But she said no more, for Adele, springing up, whispered, "Hush, Kate! It's a secret!"

After breakfast Adele ran down to the barn, and Terrence, Mr. Doring's handy-man, hitched her black pony, Firefly, to the little red cart. Into this were stowed the lunch and cleaning utensils, and then Adele drove out of the yard, waving to her mother and Kate.

The homes of the other six were soon visited, as they were all in the same neighborhood, and each girl appeared with scrubbing-brush and apron and pail.

"We'll take turns riding," said Adele, as she leaped lightly to the ground. "Betty, you may drive, and Gertrude Willis, you climb in and ride and keep an eye on the scrubbing-brushes, lest they attempt to hop out over the sides. The rest of us will trudge along behind."

Gertrude had not been strong during the winter, and that was why thoughtful Adele had suggested that she should ride; and as for little Betty Burd, the youngest of the seven, to own a pony like Firefly was the dearest desire of her heart, but her widowed mother felt that other luxuries were more necessary. Adele, knowing this, took every opportunity which offered to give Betty the pleasure of riding or driving Firefly.

Across the meadow they went, a gay cavalcade. Like all young things in spring, their hearts were filled with joy and they wanted to dance and sing. During the week the maple wood had changed from brown to silvery green, and there were patches of fresh grass along the banks of the laughing brook.

“Hark!” cried Adele with glowing eyes, as she stopped and held up one hand. “Did I hear it or did I not?”

They all listened, and from a clump of bushes near there arose, sweet and clear,

the morning song of a robin. Then, with a rushing of wings, the redbreast was up and away.

“Cheerily! Cheerily! The robins sing.

We’ve come to tell you. It’s spring! It’s spring!”

Adele sang happily.

“I hope you all wished on the first robin,” Rosamond exclaimed, “for that wish is sure to come true.”

“Well,” said Adele thoughtfully, “I don’t believe that there’s a thing in the whole world that I have to wish for. I’ve mother and father and Jack and a happy home and such nice friends. What is there left for one to desire?”

“Lucky Adele!” Betty Burd said almost wistfully; and then Adele remembered how lonely Betty and her mother were for the loved one who so recently had been taken away; but brave little Betty, sensing this, called cheerily, “Trot along, Firefly! Let’s run them a race!” and Firefly did trot

along at such a gay pace that the brushes and pails rattled about and Gertrude had quite a time to keep them from bobbing out, while the girls on foot had to run and skip to keep up, and so, gayly, they soon reached the Secret Sanctum.

Adele unhitched Firefly, with Betty helping, and then the pony was allowed to roam, for he never wandered far away from his mistress.

The door and window of the cabin were soon open, and Bertha, who had been appointed director-in-chief of the scrubbers' brigade, began to issue orders. "Somebody fill the pails at the brook," she said, "and somebody else be gathering sticks for a fire. Hot water gets things much cleaner than cold."

And so the girls skipped about, finding wood, and filling pails, and starting a fire, for, of course, Bertha had some matches.

"Did any one think of scouring-powder?" asked Peggy Pierce, as she rolled up her sleeves and donned her big apron.

Silently Bertha produced the required article.

“Burdie, what an orderly brain you must have,” Rosamond exclaimed in wonder and admiration. “I never would have thought of soap-powder in a thousand years.”

“You’d have brought the latest song or a bit of tatting, wouldn’t you, Rosie?” Doris Drexel asked, to tease. But Adele, fearing that Rosamond might be hurt, hastily added, “We need all sorts of people in this world to keep it balanced. Now a story-book is much more to my liking than soap-powder, but Rose and I are going to show you young ladies that we are as good scrubbers as any of you.”

Rosamond smiled lovingly at her champion, and then, as Bertha was giving further orders, they all gathered about to listen.

“I think,” the director-in-chief was saying, “that it would be better to carry the rustic furniture all out by the brook, and then it can be washed there and dried in

the sun, and that will clear the cabin floor and make it easier to scrub. Now, Gertrude, you take charge of the outdoor work, but don't you lift a thing, and Rosamond and Peggy will help you while the rest of us do the inside."

Then the girls took hold of the rustic table, and, by turning it sidewise, it soon stood near the brook; the rustic bed-couch followed, and, with six to lift, it was not heavy for any. Gertrude protested that she was really much stronger than she had been, but they would not allow her to help.

By this time the water in the pails was hot, and Betty Burd impulsively stooped to lift one of them from the fire, when Bertha warned: "Don't you touch that handle, Betty. It will burn you. Wait! I'll show you how." Then, taking the broom, Bertha slipped it under the hot handle. Betty took hold of the other end, and together they lifted the pail from the fire and placed it on the grass. The soap-powder was added, and, when the water was cool

enough, the brushes were dipped in and the rustic furniture was drenched and scrubbed.

“If there are any little bugs living in this bark,” Peggy said, “we bid them come forth.”

“They’ll be drowned little bugs before many minutes,” Rosamond added, as she threw a pail of fresh water from the brook over the table, to rinse off the soap-suds. This they also did to the couch-bed and the stools, and then the rustic furniture was left in the warm noon sunshine to dry and sweeten.

Meanwhile, the inside of the cabin was being thoroughly scoured, and many a startled spider darted out into the meadow, never to return.

At last the four maidens appeared in the doorway, and Adele threw herself down on the warm ground as she exclaimed, “Well, if scrub-ladies get as weary as this in their bones, I’m glad that I’m planning to take up a different profession.”

“Oh, you girls had the hardest part of it,” Gertrude declared. “Scrubbing the furniture was really like play.”

“Well,” said Adele, “we seven have banded together with the firm resolve of looking on the sunny side of things, and the sunny side of this scrubbing is—”

“That it’s done,” Rosamond interrupted.

“I’ll agree that is one sunny side to it,” laughed Adele, “and the other is, that we’ll enjoy our Secret Sanctum so much more, now that it is sweet and clean—”

“And bugless,” put in Betty Burd.

Adele, heeding not the interruption, continued, “And you know a thing that’s worth having is worth working for.”

“Oh, Della,” cried Peggy Pierce, “would you mind postponing the lecture until after we have our lunch? I’m positively famished.”

“So am I,” Rosamond declared.

“Well, since we’re hungry, suppose we eat,” said the practical Bertha.

“Hurrah for our treasurer!” cried Betty Burd, springing up and dancing toward the little red cart with a sprightliness which did not suggest weariness of bones. Then, climbing up, she handed out the seven baskets, and soon a tempting repast was spread on the paper table-cloth which Rosamond had brought.

“Did ever sandwiches taste so good before?” muttered Peggy Pierce, with a mouth full of bread and cold chicken.

“Who said olives?” asked Adele, as she sighted a little pile in front of Rosamond.

“Pardon me for not passing them sooner,” Rosamond exclaimed, with elaborate politeness as she lifted the paper napkin on which they were heaped, but, this being moist, the olives fell through and rolled about on the table-cloth.

“Grabbing isn’t manners!” Doris Drexel called, as Betty Burd pounced upon one.

“There are two olives apiece,” said Rosamond, “so you might as well grab that many if you wish.”

“I did have a chocolate cup-cake apiece for us,” moaned Adele, “but that brother Jack of mine came out into the kitchen, and, without as much as saying ‘by your leave,’ he ate the biggest, and when I went back to the jar for more, nary a one was left.”

“Never mind, Della,” Bertha condoned, “I have an extra sugar cookie, — they’re made out of real cream — and you shall have it.”

“Yum-m!” murmured Rosamond as she took a bite of her sugar cookie. “Aren’t they delicious! I suppose you made them, Burdie.”

“I did that,” Bertha replied, expecting again to hear how practical she was.

“You’ll make a good wife for a poor man, a missionary or somebody like that,” said Doris Drexel, as she nibbled daintily on her cookie, to make it last as long as she could.

“Marry!” said Bertha scornfully. “I’m not going to marry anybody.”

“Well, you needn’t be so snappy about it,” laughed Doris. “I didn’t mean right away, to-morrow. I know you’re only thirteen, though tall for your age.”

“Girls!” the sentimental Rosamond exclaimed. “Which one of us do you suppose will have the first romance?”

“Not I,” laughed Adele, as she sprang up and shook the crumbs from her lap; and then she added reproachfully, “There’s somebody at this picnic who hasn’t had a bite to eat and it’s a shame, so it is. He’s coming now to tell us what he thinks about it.”

The girls looked around and there stood Firefly, gazing reproachfully at them.

“I choose to feed him,” cried Betty Burd, springing up; and dancing again to the cart, she called gayly, “Come on, you darling Firefly. Here’s the nicest hay for you, and some oats and a lump of sugar for your dessert.”

The other girls repacked the baskets and tossed the papers on the dying embers of

their fire. It had been made close to the brook, so that they could put it out quickly if the dry grass began to burn.

Then, to their delight, they found that the floor of the cabin was dry, and so the warm, clean furniture was carried back in, and then Adele exclaimed, as she brought forth a pad and pencil, "Sit down everybody, and, since your brains are rested, I shall expect them to produce brilliant ideas. Now gaze about our Secret Sanctum and tell what it needs."

"There's a green fly coming in at the window," Doris Drexel announced. "We ought to tack up mosquito-netting."

"Good," exclaimed Adele, as she wrote down the suggestion. "We'll call that item one."

"I think we ought to make a sort of mattress for this hard couch," Peggy remarked, "if it's intended for comfort."

"And sofa-pillows we need in plenty," said the rather indolent Rosamond, who liked things luxurious.

“I’ll contribute a pine pillow,” Doris volunteered. “I have such a fragrant one, and it’s just the thing for a rustic place like this.”

“We need a bowl for flowers,” said Rosamond. “Mother has a big blue one with a chip in it, and it would look adorable on the center-table filled with buttercups and ferns.”

“Fine!” cried Adele brightly; “item five. And in every one of our pantries, on top shelves or in out-of-the-way places, there is apt to be chipped or cracked china. With our mothers’ consent, let’s bring it over here and have a china-closet. Then, when we wish to give a party, we shall have plenty of dishes.”

“But where’s the closet?” asked Betty Burd, looking about as though she expected one to appear like magic before her.

“We’ll make one,” Adele announced.

“Make a china closet?” repeated Betty Burd in amazement. “Out of what?”

“Orange boxes, no less, little one,”

Adele replied. "I made a book-case once and covered it with flowered chintz, and it was just ever so pretty."

"Dad will let us have the boxes," said Bertha Angel, whose father was the leading grocer in town.

"And my dear papa will contribute the cloth, I am sure," Peggy declared. Mr. Pierce owned the Bee Hive department store.

"Some magazines would look homey scattered around on the top of the table," Gertrude remarked. "And then, we must have a bank in which to keep our funds."

"And you must have a little blank-book, Trudie, and write down in it all that we say and do," Betty Burd declared.

"Gertrude will certainly be kept busy if she does that," laughed Doris Drexel, "for some of us could out-chatter a poll-parrot."

"Naming no names," said Betty Burd, making a merry face at Doris. There was one delightful thing about their youngest

member, she always took teasing good-naturedly and joined in a laugh, even though it were about herself, as gayly as did the rest.

“And then, when our Secret Sanctum is all finished and furnished we must have a house-warming party,” Rosamond declared.

“Oh, won’t that be fun, though!” exclaimed Betty Burd, whirling around like a top.

“And we’ll invite Bob and Jack and all of the Jolly Pirates’ Club,” Doris Drexel added.

These happy girls were soon to give a party at their Secret Sanctum, though it was to be very different from the one which they were so gayly planning.

CHAPTER FOUR

ADELE'S SECRET

A secret! A secret!
Who can guess the secret?
There's blue in it and green in it,
And bird-song lilting gay,
There's dancing and there's laughter
And there's mirth and merry play.

ONE Friday, after the Secret Sanctum had been furnished as the girls had planned, the six were waiting for Adele under the elm-tree in the school-yard.

“Didn't we have fun last Saturday!” chattered Betty Burd. “But I don't know what we would have done if Bob Angel and Jack Doring had not carted those heavy things to the cabin for us.”

Bob Angel assisted his father after school-hours by delivering groceries, and

he had readily consented to cart the mattress and boxes to the cabin for his sister, Bertha, and her friends.

“I’m so glad I found those bright-colored prints up in our attic,” said Doris Drexel. “They are some my grandmother had, and, with their queer, old-fashioned frames, they are just suited to our Sanctum.”

“I can’t get over admiring the china-closet and the book-case,” Betty declared. “I never dreamed that such pretty things could be made out of just orange boxes.”

Rosamond glanced at her wrist-watch as she exclaimed: “Here it is five minutes to the last bell. I never knew Adele to be so late before. What can have happened?”

“If Adele is late to-day,” said Doris Drexel, “it will break her perfect record. She hasn’t even been tardy a moment this whole term.”

“Ho! Here she comes now!” cried Peggy Pierce with a sigh of relief, for the girls would have been as sorry as Adele

herself if the perfect record had been broken.

“What ever kept you so long, Della?” Rosamond called. “We’ve been waiting here for almost fifteen minutes.”

“Did you break a shoe-lace?” Doris Drexel inquired.

“Nary a bit of it,” laughed Adele when she could get her breath. “I happened to see a clump of violets in a sunny corner and I dug them up, roots and all, and took them over to Granny Dorset. She told me last week that she was eager for the first violets to bloom; that somehow the ache in her bones got better then, and since she can’t leave her bed to get them for herself, I thought that I would take them to her, and she was so pleased! I wish you might have seen her dear old eyes twinkle.”

“Oh, Adele, you’re always thinking of kind things to do,” Betty Burd declared. “I wish I were that way!”

“There’s the last bell!” called Peggy Pierce. “Forward! March!” But Adele

detained them, exclaiming: "Wait, girls; I have the most beau-ti-ful secret to tell you, but I'll have to keep it now until after school! Meet me under the elm-tree just as soon as ever you can."

Then into their class-room they went, but all through the morning session they kept wondering and wondering what new fun Adele was planning. In fact, Betty Burd was thinking so much about it that she could not keep her mind on her lesson, and when Miss Donovan suddenly asked her to name the capital of England, Betty was so confused that she answered, "Oh, it's a secret!"

"A secret?" exclaimed the mystified Miss Donovan. Poor Betty blushed as crimson as a poppy, and the other six girls just had to laugh.

Then Betty explained that she had meant to say that London was the capital of England, but that she had been thinking of a secret.

When at last the class was dismissed,

the Sunny Seven, as Adele called them, hurried out to the elm-tree, and Betty Burd exclaimed: "Wasn't Miss Donovan a dear not to keep me in! I was so afraid that she would, and then I couldn't have heard the secret."

"Like as not you deserved to be kept in," Bertha Angel remarked, "but we are glad that you weren't."

"Now, Adele, do tell us that secret," pleaded Peggy Pierce, and they all listened with eager anticipation.

"Look at me hard," Adele said, "and see if you can guess my secret."

The six girls turned her around and even examined the big ribbon bows on her golden-brown braids, but they couldn't find a clue to the secret.

"Don't I look a little bigger or older or something?" Adele asked.

"Oho-ho! I know!" cried Doris Drexel, clapping her hands gleefully. "Adele, it's *your* birthday."

"You are warm," Adele replied, "but it

isn't my birthday yet. It's just going to be. Think of it, girls! Next week I shall be thirteen years old and almost a young lady."

"Shall you do your hair up?" asked Rosamond Wright, whose dearest desire was to wear her curls twisted on high.

"Dear me, no," laughed Adele. "I shall wear braids until I'm twenty, I guess."

"Oh, Della, I do hope you're going to have a party," exclaimed Peggy Pierce. "I have the sweetest new dress. It's white muslin, all scattered over with pink rose-buds, and I'm just pining to be asked to a party so that I can wear it."

"Yes, I'm going to have a party," Adele replied, "but you won't be able to wear that dress to it, Peggy; it's going to be a different sort of party."

"Oh-o-o!" came a wailing chorus. "Aren't we going to be invited?"

"Not exactly," laughed their favorite, "and yet I shall expect you all to be there."

"Oh, Adele!" Bertha Angel exclaimed.

“You are so mysterious and so provoking! Do you expect us to come to your party without an invitation?”

“Of course not,” Adele replied, “and I won’t keep you guessing any longer. This is the way of it. Yesterday I went over to the orphan asylum to read stories to the very little children, as I do every Sunday, and when I was coming out I passed what I supposed was an empty class-room. The door was open a crack, and I thought that I heard some one crying inside. I looked in and saw a girl of about our own age sobbing as hard as ever she could. I had never seen her before. I went nearer and said, ‘Little girl, can I do something to help you?’ At first she only cried the harder, but I sat down beside her, and at last she told me that her mother and father were both dead and that the people she had been living with couldn’t keep her any longer, and so they had sent her to the orphans’ home. I told her that she would like it there because the matron was so kind.

“‘Yes,’ she sobbed, ‘I shall like it, I guess, but next week Saturday will be my birthday, and mother always gave me a party, but now nobody cares.’

“‘I felt as though I would have to cry, too, but I knew that would not be the way to cheer her up, so I asked her to take a walk with me and I showed her the pleasant places around the Home. She loved the woods, she said, and when we went back, an hour later, I guess she felt better, but right then and there I decided that this year, instead of having a party for *myself*, I would give a surprise birthday-party for Eva Dearman.’”

“‘Oh, Adele!’” Gertrude Willis exclaimed. “‘I am so sorry for that poor orphan girl. May we help give the party?’”

“‘That’s just what I hoped that you would want to do,’” said Adele happily. “‘I must skip home now and do my practicing, but to-morrow will be Saturday, so let’s meet in our Secret Sanctum at three o’clock and make our plans.’”

CHAPTER FIVE

PLEASANT PLANS

The Secret Sanctum log cabin stood
In Buttercup Meadows beside the green wood,
And the birds at nest-building would pause and
sing

That joyous song which they carol in spring,
And the brook as it purled on its fern-edged way,
And the daisies and buttercups golden and gay,
Were all of them telling, "It's May! Lovely
May!"

And there the maids of the Sunny Clan
Met one Saturday a party to plan.

"GIRLS," said Rosamond Wright, as she
looked out of the cabin for the twentieth
time, "it is quarter-past three and Adele
not yet come."

"Oh, I forgot," Betty Burd exclaimed,
as she placed a bowl of daisies on the rustic

center-table, "Adele asked me to tell you that she might be a little late, as she had to go on a very important errand!"

"There is some one coming now on horse-back," Peggy Pierce remarked as she came up from the brook with a pitcher of sparkling water.

"All that I can make out is a cloud of dust," said Bertha Angel, as she shaded her eyes to look.

"It is Adele!" cried Betty Burd. "She's turning into the meadow lane now."

The six girls ran out eagerly to meet the lassie, who came galloping up on Firefly. Leaping lightly to the ground, Adele let the pony go wherever he wished to browse, knowing that he would return to her when she whistled.

The girls pounced upon their favorite and led her into the cabin, where she sank down among the soft-pillows, exclaiming, "I've ridden so fast, I'm 'most out of breath, but I knew that you girls would be waiting here, and so I came on a gallop.

Now be seated and I'll tell you all about it."

Down on the floor the Sunny Six sat, tailor-fashion, and Adele began: "I've been over to the Orphans' Home to see the matron, Mrs. Friend. She's a dear! She was so pleased to hear that we wanted to give Eva Dearman a birthday party, and what do you think? That little girl was brought up just as nicely as we have been. Her father was a wealthy broker, but he lost his money, and then both of her parents died. Some neighbors took care of Eva until her money was all gone and then they sent her to the orphanage."

"Heartless wretches!" exclaimed the impulsive Betty Burd. "Seems like it wouldn't have cost them much to have given the poor motherless girl a corner in their home."

"Well, they didn't," Adele continued, "and Mrs. Friend says that all Eva Dearman has to her name is the deed to some worthless desert property in Arizona."

“Oh, girls,” exclaimed the romantic Rosamond Wright, “what if there should be gold on that desert land, and what if our Orphans’ Home girl should turn out to be an heiress!”

“Such things only happen in story-books,” said the practical Bertha Angel. “Now don’t let’s interrupt Adele again. We want to hear the plans for the party.”

“Mrs. Friend told me that there are twelve girls in the Home who are just about our own age. One of them, Amanda Brown, is so surly and disagreeable that none of the others like her, and the matron said that we need not ask her unless we wish, but of course we would not think of leaving her out.”

“Perhaps a party is just what she needs,” suggested Gertrude Willis, the minister’s daughter.

“And now,” said Adele, “don’t you think it would be nice to give a present to each one of the Home girls?”

“It would be a nice thing to do, surely,”

Gertrude answered. "How much money have we in the club treasury?"

The girls had each given what they could to start a Sunnyside fund, and Doris Drexel, whose father was a bank president, had contributed a small bank in which to keep their wealth.

Bertha Angel rose and said gayly, "I'll go and get the bank and then we'll count our money."

Now, back of the log cabin was a shed, and, one of the boards in the floor being loose, the girls had hidden their bank in a dark hole which they had found underneath it. The shed was then padlocked and the precious fund they believed was surely safe. It would have been safe enough had it been locked in the log cabin, as the girls well knew, but Rosamond had declared that it was much more romantic to steal out to the shed and place it in the dark hole under the loose board, and so, to please her, this had been done.

Bertha took the rusty key and ran around

to the shed. When the door was open, the girl noticed that the board was slightly lifted, and that the stone which they usually placed on it had been rolled away. What could it mean? Kneeling, she lifted the board higher and thrust her hand into the dark hole. But the bank was not there.

Springing up, she ran back to the cabin, calling excitedly, "Girls! Girls! What do you suppose has happened?"

The startled six rushed out of the cabin door. "Why, Bertha, what is the matter?" Adele exclaimed. "You look as though you had seen a ghost."

"It's worse than a ghost," said Bertha dismally. "Our bank is gone."

"Gone!" echoed all of the girls in amazement.

"Then we can't give the party or the presents or anything," wailed Betty Burd.

"And I've spent all of my allowance for two months to come," moaned Adele.

The girls reached the shed and each one felt in the dark hole under the loose board.

“It must have been a tramp,” Doris Drexel declared.

“Maybe he’s hiding in the woods this very moment,” said Rosamond fearfully.

“It couldn’t have been a tramp,” Bertha remarked thoughtfully, “because the door was locked and there is no window.” Then suddenly she burst into a peal of merry laughter. The other six looked at her in puzzled amazement.

“Why, Bertha,” Adele exclaimed, “surely there is nothing funny about it!”

“Yes there is,” Bertha replied, her eyes dancing. “Don’t you remember that, at our last business meeting, we decided that our bank *might* be stolen, and that we would change its hiding-place?”

“Oh, of course,” said Peggy Pierce. “And that very day I took it down-town and asked father to keep it in his safe. I’ve been cramming so hard for examinations, I guess, that now I can’t remember anything.”

“Never mind, Peggy,” said Adele, as

she slipped her arm around the crestfallen girl. "Our memories all play strange pranks at times." Then, turning to the others, she called, "Come on; let's don our hats and finish this meeting down at the Bee Hive, because, of course, we would buy the birthday presents there anyway."

Firefly came on a gallop when Adele whistled, and whinnying for the lump of sugar which his mistress always had for him.

"Gertrude, would you like to ride?" Adele asked. But Gertrude said that she wasn't a bit tired and would much rather walk with the others.

"Well then, Betty," Adele began, and the others laughed at the happy eagerness with which that small girl clambered up on the pony's back. Betty was only eleven, though she would soon be twelve. She was *petite* and dark and sparkling, and everybody's pet. Away she galloped over Buttercup Meadows, her hair flying out like a mantle about her shoulders.

Half an hour later the six who were walking reached the Bee Hive, and found Betty, flushed from her gay ride, awaiting them. Luckily at that hour of the day the store was not as busy as its name implied, and jolly Mr. Pierce gave his whole attention to the flock of happy girls. How he laughed when he heard the story of the lost bank. Out of the safe it was taken and the money was counted by the treasurer.

“Exactly six dollars and thirty-three cents,” she announced. “Now the question is, will that amount of money purchase suitable birthday presents for twelve guests?”

The girls had not noticed that during the counting Peggy, the darling of her father’s heart, had beckoned him to the back of the store and had begged him to be a *dear* and give them something extra nice for the orphans. Had the girls known about this, they would not have been as surprised as they were when Mr. Pierce stepped forward with a tray on which were ever so many necklaces with locketts of different designs.

“Oh-h!” breathed the six with delighted sighs. “But, Mr. Pierce, we never could purchase twelve of these adorable chains for six dollars and thirty-three cents.”

“The cause is such a good one,” said Mr. Pierce, with a twinkle at Peggy, “that you may have them at cost.”

Then followed a rapturous fifteen minutes, during which the girls selected twelve necklaces and lockets.

“Orphans always have to wear things just alike,” Adele declared, “and so I am sure that they would like to have these different.”

“I suppose that we ought to give them stockings or handkerchiefs or something useful,” suggested Bertha Angel, the practical.

“Maybe so,” said Adele, “but this time the poor things are going to have just what we would like for ourselves, — something useless and pretty.”

When at last the twelve necklaces were chosen, each was placed in a little square

white box lined with pink silk. The Sunny Seven thanked Mr. Pierce and then away they went with their treasures. The twelve orphans, busily working at the Home, little dreamed of the pleasure that was in store for them.

CHAPTER SIX

A SURPRISE PARTY

THE eventful Saturday dawned bright and sunny. Adele awoke as soon as did Robin Red, who lived in the blossoming apple tree close to her window. Perched on a teetering twig, he caroled his good-morning song and Adele listened with a happy heart.

“Such a beautiful, sunny day for our party,” she thought joyously as she hurriedly dressed, tiptoeing about, that she need not awaken the rest of the family. The Sunny Seven had agreed to rise at dawn and meet at the log cabin as early as they possibly could, for there were many things to be done to make ready for their guests.

Meanwhile, in the orphan asylum, which was a mile out on the Lake Road, the morn-

ing tasks were begun. The atmosphere of the place was homelike, due to the kindly, mothering heart of the matron. Windows were thrown open, and sunshine, fragrant breeze, and bird-song drifted in.

Eva Dearman, upon awakening, had slipped a photograph from under her pillow, and, gazing at the sweet pictured face, she had whispered softly, "Mumsie, dear, this is my birthday, and I'm going to think that you are with me all day, and I'm going to try to be brave and happy, just as I know you would want me to be."

An hour later the older girls in the Home stood in line, waiting for the morning tasks to be allotted to them. Eva was next to Amanda Brown. To Amanda fell the task of sweeping and dusting the study-hall, while to Eva Dearman was given the pleasanter one of sweeping the verandas, raking the gravelly walks, and tidying up the summer-house.

"That's always the way," grumbled Amanda, as the girls turned to get brooms

and brushes. "You have the easy work given to you, but they give me that horrid old study-room to clean."

"I'll tell you what," Eva replied brightly, "I'll hurry up with my work, and if there's any time before sewing-class, I'll help you with yours."

Amanda stared in amazement. Eva had not been long in the Home, and the girls were barely acquainted with her.

Amanda Brown could not believe that any one really intended to be kind to her. She knew that the other girls did not like her, and she tried to think that she didn't care, and so, instead of thanking Eva, she rudely retorted, "Seeing's believing," and away she went.

Eva sang a little song softly to herself as she swept the front porch thoroughly and as quickly as she could. Then the garden-walks were raked until not a stray leaf or twig could be found. When her task was finished, Eva paused to listen to a bird-song as she thought: "Poor

Amanda! It is hard to be shut in that dreary study-hall this bright morning. I've half an hour left to do as I like."

Almost longingly, she looked over toward the little wood where she loved to go when her task was done, but instead she skipped into the Home, and, dancing down the hall, burst into the study-room, exclaiming gayly: "Ho there, Amanda! Seeing *is* believing!"

Amanda looked up in surprise. Indeed she could hardly believe her eyes when she saw Eva pounce upon the teacher's desk and dust it thoroughly and vigorously. In fifteen minutes the work was finished, and Amanda knew that she ought to say "Thank you," but her stubborn spirit rebelled. However, just at that moment one of the younger girls appeared in the doorway and said: "Oh, Eva Dearman, here you are! I've been hunting everywhere for you. Mrs. Friend wants you to come to her study at once, and she wants you, too, Amanda Brown."

Puzzled, and wondering if they had done anything wrong, the two girls went down the corridor and Eva rapped on Mrs. Friend's door.

A kindly voice bade them enter. In the study were ten other girls, who looked flushed and excited. What could it mean?

"Eva," said Mrs. Friend, putting her arm about the girl and kissing her on the forehead, "we want to congratulate you on this your thirteenth birthday."

Eva blushed rosily as she replied happily, "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Friend."

Then the matron continued, "Because it is Eva's birthday, I am going to give you other girls who are near her own age a half-holiday, and so you may go now and take your baths and put on your best white dresses."

"Oh, goodie! goodie!" cried several of the girls, as they clapped their hands gleefully. Then out of the door they went, remembering to be quiet in the halls. An hour later, fresh from the bath, they

donned their best white dresses and their butterfly hair-ribbon bows, which their matron had given to them at Christmas.

Eva, like a princess among her maidens, beamed on them all as she exclaimed: "You girls do look so pretty, every one of you! But," she added suddenly, "where is Amanda Brown?"

No one knew. She had not been in the bath-room, nor had she dressed, for her white gown was still lying on her cot.

A bell was ringing, which called the girls below. Eva, alone, lingered behind, looking everywhere for Amanda. At last, pausing to listen, she heard a faint sobbing, which seemed to come from the linen-closet. Eva opened the door, and there on the floor lay Amanda in a miserable heap of brown calico. She looked up with eyes that were red and swollen.

"Go away!" she said sullenly, but Eva leaned over and took hold of her hot hand.

"Amanda," she said gently, "please come out. Do you want to spoil my party?"

“I’d spoil your party if I went to it,” sobbed Amanda. “Jenny Dixon said I would. She said that I am so cross and homely, she doesn’t see why I was invited.”

“Did Jenny Dixon say that to *you*?” asked Eva with a white face.

“No-o, she didn’t say it *to me*,” Amanda replied. “She whispered it to Mabel Hicks, but she knew that I would hear, and I won’t go to your party! I won’t! I won’t!”

“Very well,” said Eva firmly, “then neither will I! Amanda Brown, do you suppose that I would enjoy my birthday-party for one minute if I knew that some one was left out and unhappy?”

Amanda found it hard to understand Eva. “I don’t see why you should care about *me*,” she replied; “nobody else does.”

“But I do care,” Eva said sincerely. “Now please hurry, Amanda, and I will help you to dress.”

With a strange new happiness in her

heart, Amanda crept from the dark closet, and half an hour later the two girls went down-stairs to the dining-room arm in arm. Amanda, in her white dress, with the crimson bows on her black braids, looked very different from the Amanda who that morning had been dusting in the study-hall.

After dinner Mrs. Friend told the twelve to put on their best hats and go out in the front yard and watch for something to come down the road.

“Oh! Oh!” cried Sadie Bell. “I do believe that we are going somewhere. I supposed that the party was to be right here at the Home.”

The twelve girls stood on the front lawn, Eva with her arm shelteringly about Amanda’s waist. Eagerly they watched down the road for — they knew not what.

“Look! Look!” cried Jenny Dixon excitedly. “Here comes something queer. Whatever can it be?”

The girls ran to the gate and beheld a very strange vehicle coming.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A BIRTHDAY FEAST

Twelve little orphan girls in white,
Hearts a-brimming with delight,
Watched with eager, dancing eyes
For what? They knew not!

A surprise!

THE twelve girls, flushed and excited, were peering down the country road at the strangest vehicle which they had ever seen. It was, in truth, a hay-rack covered with garlands of daisies and buttercups and drawn by two white horses with daisy wreaths about their necks. On the front seat was the driver, Bob Angel, with Adele at his side, while in the wagon part the Sunny Six sat on the soft new-mown hay. They were all dressed in white, and, to the surprise of the twelve orphans, the wonderful equipage stopped at their own gate. In a

twinkling Adele was on the ground, and, taking both of Eva's hands, she kissed her on the cheek, exclaiming, "Lovely Queen o' May! Your carriage has come to take you away on this your thirteenth natal day."

Tears rushed to Eva's eyes as she exclaimed, "Oh, Adele, you were so good to plan all this for me." Then, brushing them away, she said brightly, "I'd reply in rhyme if I could, for I do suppose that one should."

"Oho!" laughed Betty Burd. "Eva, you're a poet and don't know it."

"Come now," said Adele, who was Mistress of Ceremonies, "we must start on our journey. Eva, you are to sit in state with the driver, and all the rest of us are to scramble up on the hay, because we are not so important to-day."

"More rhymes," laughed Peggy Pierce.

Into the daisy-covered hay-rack the girls climbed, looking as pretty as the flowers themselves. Then Bob started the

horses, Jerry and Jingo, and somehow they seemed to know that the spirit of fun was abroad, for they galloped down the road at a merry pace and the girls laughed and sang. Soon they turned into the meadow-lane. "What a darling log cabin!" Eva exclaimed, as they neared the Secret Sanctum.

"Just wait until you see the inside of it," said Adele. Then the horses stopped and out of the hay-rack the girls leaped, not waiting for Bob's proffered assistance. Adele threw open the cabin-door and the guests entered with exclamations of pleasure.

Bertha hung back for a few last words with her brother Bob, after which he drove the equipage over near the wood, unhitched, and turned the horses out to graze. Then he took a short cut to the town.

Soon the merry fun began. There were whirling and singing and dancing games, and after an hour of rollicking, Adele invited the guests to take a walk with her in

the maple wood, so away they went, little dreaming of the delightful surprise that would await them when they returned to the cabin.

When the last gleam of white had disappeared among the trees, all was hustle and bustle in Buttercup Meadows.

“Quick now!” exclaimed Bertha Angel, who was Mistress of Ceremonies in Adele’s absence. “We must hurry if we are to have everything ready in fifteen minutes, and Adele never can keep the orphans in the woods longer than that.”

“The boys ought to be here this very second, if they are going to help us,” said Betty Burd.

“Bob and Jack promised to be here promptly at four,” Rosamond remarked, “and it’s powerful close to that now.”

“Well, you can depend on Bob,” Bertha exclaimed. “He is never even a fraction of a moment late. Being my brother, I know his virtues and otherwise.”

“What is the otherwise?” asked Peggy

Pierce, as the girls donned their big aprons and darted about at various tasks.

“Oh,” laughed Bertha, as she heaped lettuce sandwiches on a big blue plate which had a crack in it, “Bob’s besetting sin is teasing me, and such pranks as he can invent!”

“Well,” exclaimed Rosamond Wright, as she glanced at her wrist-watch, “your model brother is late to-day, for it is four to the second and there is no one in sight.”

“Oh, yes, there is,” said Betty Burd, as she came in from the brook with a bucket of sparkling water. “There are two colored men coming across lots just below here.”

Doris Drexel looked out of the door, and then she sprang back with a startled cry. “They *are* negroes, and, oh, girls, what if they should be tramps? I do wish that Bob had been here on time.”

“They are coming right this way,” whispered Betty Burd. “Hadn’t we better close the door and lock it?”

“Let me look,” said Bertha Angel, as she stepped fearlessly into the meadow. Then, to the surprise of the others, she called gayly, “Well, Rastus, do hurry up! We’ve wasted time enough as it is.”

“Why, Bertha!” exclaimed Peggy Pierce in surprise. “Do you know those colored men?”

“Know them? I should say that I do,” Bertha laughingly replied. And then she ran right up to one of them, and, shaking her finger at him, she exclaimed: “Aha, Bob Angel, now I know why you wanted to borrow my red silk handkerchief.”

Then the other girls, their fear changed to laughter, trooped out of the cabin.

“Jack Doring and Bob Angel!” Betty Burd exclaimed. “I never would have known you boys in a hundred years.”

“We-all heard you wanted some waiters,” Bob drawled, trying to talk in negro dialect, “and we-all came to apply.”

“Well, you-all are engaged,” laughed Bertha, “and now please do hustle.”

Then every one bustled about. The boys made a long table with boards and saw-horses, and benches on each side were fashioned with boxes and more boards. Soon the tables were covered with flower-bordered paper table-cloths, and there were napkins to match. Two bowls of daisies and buttercups and ferns adorned the ends of the table, and in the very center was placed a huge birthday cake, which Mrs. Doring had made for Adele. It was frosted with white, and on it were thirteen pink candy roses, for Eva and Adele that day were both thirteen.

Mrs. Drexel had sent chicken salad, and the girls themselves had made lettuce sandwiches, which were piled in tempting array. Rastus, as they called Bob Angel, was just filling the last tumbler with pink lemonade when Rosamond Wright exclaimed, "Here comes Adele!"

There was a chorus of delighted exclamations from the orphans as they approached.

“I didn’t know a table could look so beautiful,” Amanda whispered to Eva, as Adele motioned them to their places. Soon the festive board was surrounded with laughing, happy faces, and then Bob and Jack, as black as burnt cork could make them, greatly added to the merriment with their antics. They wore small white aprons, and each had a folded towel flung over one arm. They passed things with a flourish and talked a string of nonsense, trying, with more or less success, to imitate the negro dialect.

The heaps of delicious sandwiches disappeared rapidly, the pink lemonade was often replenished, and never before had a chicken salad been more appreciated.

At last Adele called gayly, “Girls, we must leave a corner for the ice-cream and cake.”

“That’s right,” laughed Gertrude Willis, while at the mention of ice-cream the orphans looked as though their fondest dreams were being fulfilled.

“Garçon!” called Adele, who was just learning a bit of French. “You may clear the table.”

The waiters put their black heads out of the cabin-door and cried, “Law, chile, wait a minute!” Later, when they did appear, each carried a partly eaten sandwich, for the boys did not intend to miss any of the good things themselves.

Adele, to save Eva from embarrassment, agreed to cut the birthday cake, but first she counted noses.

“Say, Miss Doring,” Jack drawled, “I’ll be ’bleeged to tell you, ma’am, I’ve got two noses.”

How the girls laughed, for it is easy to laugh when the heart is light. So Adele allowed two pieces for each boy. When the cake had been cut and the generous slices passed, the waiters appeared with pyramids of frosty ice-cream. Then, when this had disappeared, Rastus came out with a basket lined with flowers, but piled in the center of it were little white boxes tied with

pink and blue baby-ribbon. It was first passed to Eva, who chose the wee box which was nearest, and then waited until each orphan had drawn forth one of the dainty packages.

“Now,” said Adele, with shining eyes, “open them all together.”

How eagerly the ribbons were untied and the little boxes opened, and then what a chorus of rejoicing there was! Eva had chosen just the one that Adele had hoped she would, a slender golden chain and a locket wreathed with pearls. When it was fastened about her neck Eva exclaimed, “Oh, Adele, how can I thank you!”

But Amanda called their attention to her locket, which was set with pretty red stones. “I never owned a trinket before in all my life,” she said softly to Eva, who sat at her side. Then, almost wistfully, she asked, “Is it to be mine for keeps?” Eva fastened the chain about Amanda’s neck and softly assured her that it was to be her very own. The other ten orphans

were equally pleased, and pretty the locket looked as they hung around the necks of their new owners.

Soon Adele rose and the girls sauntered about until the flower-bedecked equipage reappeared and they donned their hats.

Eva held out both hands to Adele as she exclaimed gratefully, "If I live to be a hundred years old, I never can have a happier day."

"You and I are going to have many happy days together," Adele replied warmly. And then the Sunny Seven, who were staying behind to clear up, waved to the guests as long as the hay-rack and its black drivers were in sight.

During the day Adele had often wondered why none of the girls had congratulated her on its being *her* birthday as well as Eva's, but she was of too generous a nature to feel hurt, and so she soon forgot all about it, but her friends had not forgotten, as you shall hear.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MORE SURPRISES

WHEN Adele reached home after the orphans' surprise-party, she found a note telling her that her father and mother had gone for a ride into the country. Jack Doring, having taken a bath, was changed from black to white again. Then, donning his very best suit, he announced that he might not be in until late; and, since this was Kate's evening out, Adele was soon left all alone in the big rambling house.

Up to her room she went, just a bit weary from the long, busy day. Leaning back in her comfortable lounging-chair, Adele thought to herself, "It seems strange that even mumsie and dad have forgotten that this is my birthday, and Jack hasn't said a word about it. But then, I could not have

had a nicer time if I had had a party all for myself.”

Then, closing her eyes, she drowsily listened to the evening song of the robins who lived in the apple-tree just outside her open window. The crooning melody seemed to grow fainter and fainter to Adele; a warm, fragrant breeze from the garden brushed against her cheek, and soon she fell asleep. It was dark when she awakened, and she sat up with a start. What could it have been that had aroused her? Probably her father and mother were returning. The girl listened intently. Suddenly something fell with a crash in the room below. Springing to her feet, she turned on the light, and, running to the top of the stairs, she called: “Mother! Father! Is that you?”

There was no reply, and for one brief moment Adele’s heart stopped beating. There surely was some one down-stairs, but who could it be? Then Adele remembered that her big white Persian cat had

been asleep on its cushion when she left the library. Of course it must be Fluff prowling about, and perhaps he had tipped over a bowl of roses. She ran lightly down the stairs and switched on the library lights. The white cat rose from his cushion and yawned sleepily, so Fluff had not made the noise. Adele had a strange feeling that some one was in the room, hidden and watching her.

“I hope that I am not growing timid,” she thought to herself; and then, deciding that she would read for a while, she went out into the dining-room, where she had left her book. She was only gone one moment, but when she returned, the library was in total darkness and she knew that she had left it lighted. Before she could be very much frightened, however, there was a rushing, rustling noise, and snap! the lights were on again. Great was Adele’s surprise at finding the room filled with laughing friends. “*Happy Birthday!*” they shouted.

Adele sank down on a chair and looked so white and strange that Jack ran to her side and exclaimed, "Oh, Della, did we frighten you too much? I didn't realize that it would be so scary."

"I was afraid that we should frighten Adele," Gertrude said remorsefully, as she knelt beside her friend. "That's why I suggested that we go to the front door and ring."

But Adele, quickly regaining her composure, sprang up with a laugh, and the color returned to her cheeks as she said: "No, you did not frighten me too much. I guess I am just surprised, and that is what one should be at a surprise-party, isn't it?"

Then, quite herself again, she chattered on gayly: "Do look at you all, in your pretty best! And Peggy has her heart's desire — a chance to wear her new muslin with the rose-buds on it. It's as pretty as can be, Peggy, and your pink sash is adorable. Well, now I must run up-stairs and dress."

“I’ll go with you and be your maid,” said Gertrude Willis, who was Adele’s dearest friend. “You other girls may stay and entertain the boys.”

With Jack as Master of Ceremonies, the fun soon began. Meanwhile Adele bathed and dressed in her prettiest. From below came the merry strains of the victrola, playing waltzes and hops. When the two girls descended the stairway, they found that the library had been cleared of furniture. Mrs. Doring, having returned from her drive, had made this good suggestion.

Then what a merry hour they had. Suddenly the front-door bell rang and Adele skipped to open it. An expressman stood outside and he inquired, “Does Adele Doring live here?”

“Yes, she does,” that wondering young lady replied, and then into the hall the expressman brought a wooden box, which he deposited on the floor. When he was gone Adele exclaimed eagerly, “Oh! Oh! What do you suppose is in it?”

“I’ll get the hammer and then we will find out,” Jack said. A moment later he was prying off the cover. There, among soft tissue papers, lay ever so many books, all bound in pale blue, and the set was called “Stories That Girls Like Best.” Indeed, there was every title among them that a girl of thirteen could wish to possess. Adele clasped her hands and exclaimed rapturously, “Who could have sent me such a beautiful gift?”

“Here’s a card,” Jack said, as he handed it to her, and eagerly she read:

TO OUR DARLING ADELE DORING

FROM

HER SUNNY SIX.

“I just knew it!” cried their happy hostess, “and I do wish that I had arms long enough to hug you all at once.”

“Adele!” exclaimed Betty Burd. “Don’t make such a terrible wish. An old witch might be lurking around and it might come true.”

“Well, I hope not,” laughed Adele, “for my beauty would surely be spoiled if my arms dragged on the floor.”

Jack and Bob carried the pretty blue books into the library and placed them on the center-table, and then the merry fun was renewed, when suddenly the side-door bell clanged and Adele skipped to open it, but there was no one outside.

“Some one is playing a prank, I guess,” she laughingly said. But Jack suggested that they turn on the porch light, and when this was done Adele saw a low bird’s-eye-maple table on which stood a beautiful drooping fern. When the boys had carried it into the library Adele gleefully clapped her hands as she exclaimed, “It’s just what I need for the bay-window in my room.”

The little card which hung on the fern informed her that this was a gift from her brother Jack and his six boy friends, who called themselves the Jolly Pirates. Adele thanked them with shining eyes.

“Now,” she said, “surely the surprises are over,” but just that very moment Mrs. Doring called from the top of the stairs, “Adele, come up here a moment and bring the girls with you.” And so up the stairs they flocked, looking for all the world like a bevy of butterflies in their pretty muslin dresses and their many-colored sashes.

“Maybe it’s another surprise,” exclaimed Betty Burd, who was enjoying Adele’s happiness as much as did that girl herself.

Adele’s room was brilliantly lighted, and her adorable mother and her Giant Daddy were standing in the door, waiting. Into the room the girls trooped, and Adele gave a cry of joy when she saw a bird’s-eye-maple writing-desk, on which were rose-colored blotters and a silver ink-stand and scratcher, and holders for both pen and pencil.

The card fastened to the desk read:

TO “HEART’S DESIRE”

FROM

“GIANT FATHER.”

These were the pet names which they had for each other. How Adele hugged him! And then he laughingly exclaimed, "Now put on your spectacles, for there is something else in this room for you to find."

Adele looked about, high and low. Suddenly she spied a water-color painting in a rustic frame. It was a picture of their very own log cabin, painted when the meadow was yellow-and-white with daisies and buttercups. There were fleecy clouds over a sunny blue sky, and the woods in the background were fresh and green, and, as for the laughing brook, you could fairly see it sparkle and hear it gurgle as it danced along.

"From Mother," a little card told her.

"Mumsie!" Adele cried. "An artist from the city painted it, didn't he? I watched him one day when he was just beginning on the brook, and how I loved it, but I never even dreamed that I was to own it."

Now, just at that very moment bells

began ringing all over the house: the front-door bell, the side-door bell, the Chinese gongs, the little silver tea-bell clanged and jingled. What could it mean?

“More surprises!” laughed Adele. “Come along, girls; let’s fathom the mystery.”

So down the stairs the Sunny Seven trooped. Bob Angel stood in the lower hall, ringing a dinner-bell, as he chanted:

“Ding, dong, dell!
Hark to the bell—ll—ll!
Come, follow me,
And see what you will see!”

“Bob’s happy now,” his sister Bertha jokingly exclaimed. “Like all little boys, he loves to make a big noise.”

The girls trooped after the bell-ringer, and as they entered the library, the folding-doors slid silently open, and such a festive scene as they beheld in the room beyond!

A mahogany table was decked with shining silver and sparkling glass, and in the

center was a frosted cake with thirteen candles ablaze. Pretty name-cards told each guest where to sit, and of course Adele was at the head of the table and Bob at the foot. Kate, with her kindly Irish face aglow, appeared in the kitchen door-way and then Mrs. Doring came in to help pass the good things.

“Two feasts in one day!” exclaimed Bob Angel. “I wish I had the capacity of Giant Blunderbuss of fairy lore.”

The first course soon disappeared, and then the cake, with its twinkling candles, was placed in front of Adele to be cut.

“Thirteen is going to be my lucky number hereafter,” Adele laughed, and then she puckered up her mouth and blew the lights out. “Oho, here’s a card on the cake,” she called gayly, and then she read aloud, “For my little Colleen, from Kate.”

“Another present!” cried the delighted girl. “Thank you, Kate, and when your birthday comes, I’ll make you a cake.”

“Poor Kate!” Jack Doring said in mock

sympathy. "I wouldn't have a birthday soon if I were you, Kate, but if you do have one, be sure to hide the salt-box. You know why."

Adele laughed good-naturedly as she exclaimed, "Just because I put salt in one cake instead of sugar is no sign that I am going to do it forever after."

When the generous slices were passed, Betty Burd gave a squeal of delight. "Oh, do look!" she cried. "There are things in the cake to tell our fortunes."

"Mine is a piece of straw," Dick Jensen chuckled. "So I am to be a farmer, I suppose. Well, I'd like nothing better."

"Alas and alack!" moaned Doris Drexel. "I have a thimble, and I just hate sewing, but I suppose that I shall have to be resigned to my fate."

"See what I have!" Jack Doring exclaimed, as triumphantly he held aloft a silver dime. "I just felt in my bones that I was going to be rich some day."

"Not if you have to work for it," teased

Adele, for Jack was rather inclined to be indolent.

“I wasn’t planning to work,” Jack replied calmly. “I shall find a gold mine or some little thing like that.”

“Poor little me!” moaned Rosamond Wright. “There doesn’t seem to be a thing in my piece of cake.”

Rosamond, in her pink dress, with her flushed face and short golden curls, looked as pretty as the flower after which she had been named.

“Don’t give up, Rosie,” Bob Angel called. “Seems to me I see a glint of gold there in the frosting.”

Eagerly Rosamond broke the cake where the glint was, and out fell a wedding ring.

“Congratulations!” cried Adele. “Rosie is to be our first bride.”

When each future had been prophesied and the boys and girls had eaten their ice-cream and cake, the merry party returned to the library, and soon after, as the hour was late, they took their departure.

When they were gone Adele nestled in her mother's arms, as she said softly, "Mumsie, this has been the happiest day of my life."

"That is because you have given others so much happiness," her mother replied.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MOTHER GOOSE PLAY-HOUSE

There's many a high-chair put away
For the baby that came, but could not stay.
There's many a mother-heart yearning still,
And arms that a motherless babe might fill.
There's many a home that's sad and drear,
That a prattling child might bless and cheer.

It was Sunday, the day after the eventful Saturday which would be so long remembered by the Sunny Seven, as well as by the twelve orphans who had been made so happy.

Adele, dressed in pretty white muslin and wearing her daisy-wreathed hat, tripped down the road toward the orphan asylum. She was so deep in thought that she did not notice some one standing on

the corner and evidently waiting for her, until a pleasant voice called, "May I go with you, my pretty maid?"

"Oh, Gertrude Willis!" Adele exclaimed. "I was thinking of you that very moment and wishing that you were going with me, and here you are."

These two friends were especially dear to each other. They walked on together, and Gertrude said, "Adele, I think it so nice of you to go every Sunday afternoon to tell stories to the little children at the Orphans' Home. I have often wanted to go with you, but usually father has a young people's meeting at the church and he likes me to be there, but to-day he himself suggested that I go with you."

"I'm so glad!" Adele replied, giving her friend's arm a loving squeeze. Then they talked of Eva Dearman, and decided that they would try to be like sisters to the little girl who had no home-people of her own in all the world.

"I just can't imagine what that would

be like," Gertrude remarked, as she thought of the parsonage in which there were five merry children, watched over by a loving, if dignified, father, and the dearest mother in all the world.

Mrs. Friend, the matron of the Home, greeted them pleasantly, and led them to the large, barren room where, on little red chairs, twenty small children were seated.

Their round, eager eyes were watching the door, and when they saw Adele, their faces brightened, and it seemed as though sunshine had suddenly entered the rather gloomy room.

The children, ranging from five years to eight, arose, and, standing beside their chairs, made funny little bobbing curtsies, and they piped out, like so many chirping birds, "Good afternoon, Miss Adele."

"Good afternoon, little sunbeams," Adele replied. "I have brought a friend with me to-day. Miss Gertrude is her name."

Then the tiny tots bobbed another

curtsy, and with solemn faces they piped, "Good afternoon, Miss Gertrude."

"The little darlings!" Gertrude exclaimed softly, and tears rushed to her eyes. It made her heart ache to think of all those babies and not a mother to cuddle them, and then she thought of the childless homes to which these very little ones might bring so much joy and happiness.

Meanwhile they were seated, and Adele was holding her little audience spellbound with the simple tales that all children love. Tucked away in each one of them was a thought that would help the little listener to be a better boy or girl during the following week.

When the story-hour was over, Adele arose, and that was a signal for the tiny tots to rise and chirp all together, "Thank you, Miss Adele." Then, to the surprise of Gertrude Willis, the twenty, without ceremony, rushed at Adele, and that loving girl caught as many of the children as her arms would hold.



Adele was holding her little audience spellbound.
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On their way out they stopped for a moment in the matron's office.

“Oh, Mrs. Friend,” Adele exclaimed impulsively, “how I do wish there was a sunnier spot for the nursery! That north room seems so bleak and chilly.”

“I have often wished that we had money enough to fit out a cheery nursery for our little ones,” Mrs. Friend replied with her kindly smile, as she walked outdoors with the girls. “As it is,” she continued, “we have all that we can do to feed and clothe the children entrusted to our care.”

As they sauntered toward the gardens Mrs. Friend said, “Yonder is a little house that used to be occupied by a gardener. It is quite empty now, and there is a sunny front room in it, and I have often wished that I had some way of making it into a play-house for the very little children.”

“Oh, Mrs. Friend!” Adele exclaimed eagerly. “If we can find the way, may we do it?”

“Indeed you may!” Mrs. Friend replied,

smiling at the girl's enthusiasm, and then she bade them good-bye.

On Monday morning Adele started to school hippety-skipping and singing a merry little song to herself. There were berry-bushes abloom in the field over which she was taking a short cut, and from one of these just ahead of her there arose a clear, whistling note.

"A bobolink!" Adele thought, as she stole nearer to catch a glimpse, if she could, of the feathered songster, but, to her surprise, the notes changed to "Bob White!" Adele stood still, puzzled, when from the blossoming bush, sweet and clear, arose a robin's morning-song.

"How strange!" the girl thought. "It must be a birds' convention!" She tiptoed nearer, when up from behind the bushes sprang a bevy of laughing girls, and joyously they cried, "The top of the morning to you, Adele."

"But where are the birds?" asked the mystified girl.

“Here in my hand,” Peggy Pierce replied, as she displayed a silver whistle. “It’s a musical instrument belonging to my small brother. I borrowed it because I wanted you all to hear the sweet bird notes.”

“Truly, I thought there were birds in the bush,” Adele said. Then, turning to Gertrude Willis, she asked, “Trudie, have you told the girls about our plan?”

“Of course not, Della,” that maiden replied. “The president of the Sunnyside Club should make all announcements.”

“Oh, what is it? Do tell us!” Peggy Pierce and Betty Burd exclaimed eagerly.

“It isn’t a party this time,” Adele replied, smiling at little Betty’s enthusiasm, “but it is another opportunity for our Sunnyside Club to do a kind deed.” And then she told them about the gloomy room which was the nursery for the very little children at the orphanage; about the toys, many of them old and broken; and about the cheery cottage in the garden, and how

Mrs. Friend had said that they might fit it up as a play-house if only they could find the way.

“Oh, girls!” Betty Burd cried with shining eyes. “We surely *can* find the way; that is, if mumsie is willing. I had the darlingest play-house in the South. Papa was an architect and he planned it himself. There were three rooms in it, and one of them was the home of Mother Goose. I wasn’t very old then, but I shall never forget the joy in my heart when I first beheld that room. It was like stepping into a Mother Goose picture-book and being able to skip about in it. Then, when papa died and we came North to keep house for Uncle George, I just couldn’t bear to part with those Mother Goose things, so mumsie packed them in a big box and brought them along, and ever since they have been up in the attic.

“Of course I am too old to play with those things now, but wouldn’t I just love to fit up a play-house with them for those

poor little orphans! We'll do it, too, if mumsie is willing."

Betty's mother gladly gave her consent, and the following Saturday found the Sunny Seven in the orphanage garden. The little cottage had been thoroughly cleaned, much to the delight of Rosamond Wright, who did not care to attend another scrubbing-party.

The two orphans, Eva Dearman and Amanda Brown, at Adele's invitation, came out to help, and how happy they were to be included!

"I do wish that the Mother Goose box would come, so that we might begin to unpack it," Betty Burd declared impatiently.

"Bob said that he would bring it over just as soon as his morning work was done," Bertha explained.

"Here he comes now, and Jack Doring is with him!" Doris Drexel called. The girls crowded to the sunny window and looked out at the driveway; then Adele

threw open the door as Bob leaped to the ground. Pretending to be a cartman, the boy exclaimed in a rather poor imitation of Irish brogue, "Good day to yez. And where will yez be afther havin' the baggage put?"

"Oh, Bob!" Betty Burd cried. "Weren't you an angel to bring it over for us!"

"Of course he's an angel, and so am I, too, for that matter!" Bertha exclaimed.

"Oh, I quite forgot that 'Angel' is his name," Betty gayly replied. "But do please bring the box right in and set it in the middle of the floor."

When this was done, she laughingly inquired, "And now, Mr. Cartman, what might your charges be?"

"Hum-m!" said the mischievous Bob. "Since it's fer ladies, we'll make the charges light. I think one box of fudge would do nicely. What do you say, Jack?"

These boys well knew that wherever the girls were gathered together, there also was a batch of fudge.

“But we want some for ourselves,” Doris protested. “I think two squares for each of you would be good pay for delivering the box.” Then she added brightly, “Girls! I have a brilliant idea! We might give the boys four squares each if they will open the box and help us unpack; but if they refuse, they shall have nothing at all.”

“Of course we will open it for you,” Jack Doring replied amiably, as he took a hammer out of his coat-pocket. “Here, Bob,” he added, “proceed to show the ladies what an excellent box-opener you are.”

“Not a bit of it,” Bob replied. “Wouldn’t deprive you, old chap, of all that honor for worlds.” So indolent Jack, having the hammer, had to pry off the boards, and then merrily the unpacking began. There were four large squares of cotton cloth on which were colored prints of Mother Goose pictures.

“Boys,” Betty implored, “please find a step-ladder and tack these up for us, and

then we shall be through in short order.”

“I should call it a large order,” Bob Angel declared, but nevertheless he went out and soon returned with the needed step-ladder. Then from a high seat on the top of it he announced, “Ladies, be it known that my charges for tacking are ten fudge squares with chopped walnuts in them.”

“I’ll tell you what!” Adele exclaimed. “If you boys will help us to-day, we girls will soon give a fudge party and you shall have just all the candy that you can eat.”

“Three cheers for Adele!” Bob exclaimed. And then so ably did the boys lend their assistance that the work of unpacking and decorating was soon completed, and with laughter and joking they remounted the wagon and rode away.

An hour later the twenty kiddies were admitted to their new play-house. Mrs. Friend was with them, and she was as pleased as they were with the Mother Goose room. There were cloth dolls dressed to represent the different characters, and

woolly Mother Goose animals, and there were bright picture-books which babies could look at to their heart's content and the pages wouldn't tear.

Betty Burd, with her arm about Adele's waist, stood looking on, and she was hoping that somehow her dear daddy might know of the wonderful happiness that his gift to her was giving to these baby orphans.

When the children were willing to sit down and be quiet, Adele told them the stories that went with the pictures on the walls. Then, when it was all over and the Sunny Seven were about to depart, the little ones scrambled to their feet and, making their funny little bobbing curtsies, piped out, "Thank you, Miss Betty." This was so unexpected that tears rushed to Betty's eyes and her voice trembled as she said, "You're welcome, little darlings."

On their way home Rosamond exclaimed, "And now, girls, let us plan that fudge party which we promised to give for the boys!"

“Not yet, Rosie,” Adele replied. “Final examinations are drawing near, and I think we would better plan to just study and study, but as soon as vacation arrives, we’ll have the nicest fudge party that ever was or could be.”

And with that promise Rosamond had to be content.

CHAPTER TEN

PREPARING FOR EXAMINATIONS

ON the first Saturday in June the Sunny Seven were to meet at the Secret Sanctum, to begin a review of the term's lessons, for the final examinations were only three weeks away.

Six of the girls were already there at the appointed hour, but, strange to relate, the one who was usually first, this day was last.

“Perhaps Betty isn't coming,” Adele said. “It is possible that she is not going to take the examinations. You know she is a year younger than we are, and though she had been in Seven B in the South, the lessons are different, and when she came North last term, they put her in our grade on trial, and I think that she has found it very hard to keep up.”

“You are right, Adele,” Gertrude replied. “Mrs. Burd told me that she would far rather have Betty remain in this grade another year, but her Uncle George is eager for her to advance.”

“Here comes Betty on a skip and a run!” Rosamond exclaimed as she looked out of the cabin-door, and in another moment the little girl about whom they had been talking, danced in, and, sinking down on the couch, fanned her flushed face with her broad-brimmed hat.

“Girls!” she exclaimed as soon as she could get her breath. “I had decided to give up taking the examinations, — mother wanted me to, — when something very remarkable happened, and I am so excited about it, I just don’t know what to do.”

“Betty! Betty!” laughed Adele. “We can’t make head or tail out of what you are saying. Won’t you begin at the beginning of your story?”

“All right,” Betty replied, as she settled down among the sofa-pillows. “You know

my Uncle George is a very smart young man.”

“He isn’t very young, is he?” Rosamond inquired.

“Why, mother says that he is,” Betty replied vaguely. “Of course he isn’t a boy, but every one says that he is very young to be an editor and hold such a responsible position on a big city newspaper.”

“I’ve heard my Giant Daddy say that your Uncle George writes very cleverly,” Adele said kindly.

Betty gave her a grateful glance as she continued, “Well, I guess he must write pretty well, for he’s just sold his first story for one hundred dollars. The check came on this morning’s mail, and Uncle George opened the letter while we were at breakfast. When he saw the check, he gave a whoop just like a boy, and he exclaimed, ‘Betsy Bobbets,’—that’s his pet name for me,—‘if there’s anything in this shining universe that you want, if a hundred dol-

lars will buy it, you shall have it.' Of course I said that I wanted a jet-black pony, just like Firefly, and Uncle George jokingly replied: 'Betsy, we'll make a bargain. If you will pass perfect in spelling and grammar, the pony shall be yours!' Mother said, 'Oh, George, I do not wish Betty even to try the examinations.' But he exclaimed, 'Puppy-dogs and fiddlesticks! My dear madam, this daughter of yours is possessed of as fine a quality of gray matter as one could wish, but she is sadly lacking in concentration and perseverance.' "

"How could you remember all that?" Rosamond exclaimed.

"I guess because I was so interested and was listening hard, and, besides, I knew that Uncle George was right. I had not expected to be promoted this year, and so I had not really tried to learn the term's work."

"I believe that you could do it," Adele remarked. "We should be sorry to be pro-

moted and leave our little one behind. Now our plan is to review the entire term's work, and if we go over and over it with Betty, we shall also be impressing the lessons more firmly on our own minds."

"Then you think that I could do it?" Betty asked eagerly.

"Of course you can," Adele replied confidently, as she opened a speller. "You all sit in a row and we will play school, the way we used to do, and we'll take turns being the teacher. Now, Betty, don't you mind if you make mistakes, but just listen and listen, and you will be surprised how much you will learn."

Then followed a busy hour, and a robin, alighting for a moment on the door-sill, wondered why girls could stay within on such a perfect June day. But what could a robin know of examinations only three weeks away?

When at last the girls were sauntering across the meadows on their homeward way, Betty exclaimed joyously, "Girls,

I've learned more to-day than in a whole month at school."

"That's because you put your mind on it, little one," Gertrude replied. "I have always felt that you could do much better if you really wanted to."

Suddenly Betty laughed gleefully. "Won't Miss Donovan be surprised," she chuckled, "if to-morrow in class I should happen to spell a word correctly? She says that I can think up more wrong ways to spell a word than any one she ever met."

As Betty had prophesied, Miss Donovan was indeed surprised to hear a constantly improved recitation from that young lady, but little did she dream of the hours and hours that were spent by that once heedless girl in poring over spellers and grammars.

One morning when the girls met under the elm tree, Doris Drexel announced, "Only ten more days before the final examinations."

"Oh-h!" moaned Betty Burd dolefully.

“If you were saying only ten days more before Betty Burd’s funeral, I wouldn’t feel a bit more dismal about it!”

“Cheer up, little one,” Adele said brightly. “You are getting on famously. Can you spell ‘believe’ to-day?”

“B-e-l-i-e-v-e,” Betty replied with a faint attempt at a smile. “I do believe,” she added with conviction, “that whoever made up the English language tried to tangle the letters in it just as much as possible.”

“Those old sages didn’t know about your pony, Betsy, or they never would have done it,” Bertha Angel gayly remarked, and then the last bell called them to their classes.

This unusual application to her studies at last began to tell on Betty, and as the fatal day drew near she visibly drooped.

“George!” Mrs. Burd exclaimed one morning, when Betty, after having sat listlessly at the table, finally departed for school without having touched her breakfast. “If you do not forbid Betty’s study-

ing so hard, I shall do so myself. She's all I have left in the world, now that her daddy is gone, and I don't care if she never, never learns to spell. If you wanted to give her a pony, why didn't you do so without making her work so hard for it?"

George Wainwright had been unusually busy in his city office of late, and was seldom at the table when Betty was there, and as for the examinations, he had quite forgotten about them. But that night he was home for dinner, and he noticed how pale was the little girl whom he so dearly loved, and when she refused to eat chocolate pudding and whipped cream, her very favorite dessert, then, indeed, did his conscience smite him, and he decided to take the child out of school at once and get the pony, that she might ride and bring the roses back to her cheeks. And so it was that he asked her to walk with him in the garden while he had his after-dinner smoke.

This was always a treat to Betty, and she went with him gladly. After they had

walked up and down the gravelly paths a few times, Uncle George asked suddenly, "And how's the spelling getting on, Betsy Bobbets?"

"Well," said Betty with a sigh, "I've got the 'i-e' right at last, and if they will examine me on that I am sure to be perfect; that is, I shall be if it's a written examination. But, oh, Uncle George, if the principal, Mr. Dickerson, comes in and gives us an oral one, I won't be able to spell one single word. I get so scared when he asks me a question; something clutches at my throat, and everything turns black before me, and even the words that I *know* I know, I just don't know at all."

Uncle George laughed at the twisted sentence, and then he drew the little girl down on a bench beside him.

"What is it that clutches at your throat, little one?" he asked.

Betty looked surprised as she replied, "Why, nothing, really, I suppose!"

"That's just it," Uncle George said

earnestly. "People call it fear, but it is nothing. What is there to be afraid of? Since you know how to spell the word, all that you have to do is to spell it. And even if you misspell it, no harm is done. The word will always remain, and you can learn it at another time. Courage is the quality that I want my Betsy Bobbets to cultivate, — courage and fearlessness."

"Oh, Uncle George!" Betty exclaimed, more like her bright self. "I am so glad that you have talked to me this way. I feel ever so much braver. I guess that all I am really afraid of is that I shall lose the pony."

How Uncle George wanted to tell her that she should have the pony, come what might, but he decided that perhaps it would be better for her character-development if he left things as they were.

A few moments later Betty danced into the dining-room. Her mother, who was putting away the silver, glanced up anxiously. She hoped that her brother George

had told Betty that she need not take the examinations, and she was convinced that this was so when Betty exclaimed gayly, "Oh, Mumsie, where's my chocolate pudding and whipped cream? I'm so hungry for it!"

"It's in the china-closet, dear. I thought that you might want it later," the mother replied. And then, while Betty was eating the pudding with her old appreciation, Mrs. Burd asked, "Are you glad that you aren't going to take the examinations, Betty?"

"But I am going to take them, mumsie dear, and you will be so proud of me when I bring home a card marked 'perfect' in grammar and spelling."

Mrs. Burd was indeed puzzled, but she said no more just then. The girls, too, noticed the change in Betty, and then one morning, under the elm-tree, Peggy Pierce chanted dolefully, "And this is the day of the final examinations. They mean to find out how little I know."

“Oh-h!” moaned Rosamond. “I’m scared stiff.”

Then Betty surprised them all by asking: “What’s scaring you, Rosie? You know your lessons, don’t you?”

“Indeed I do! I know every word in every book from cover to cover,” Rosie responded. “And so do we all, for that matter, for we’ve been over them together at least twenty times.”

“Well,” Betty remarked, “my Uncle George told me that fear is really nothing at all but just our imaginations. I know that there is nothing to be afraid of, and I’m not going to be afraid of it.” And before the girls could recover from their astonishment, the last bell rang and they went to their class-room.

Miss Donovan smiled encouragingly at them as they entered, and then the books were taken up and the examination-papers passed.

Some of the grammar questions were rather hard, and took a clear brain to think

out. Adele glanced anxiously at Betty, but when that little girl smiled back so reassuringly, she gave her no further thought.

For an hour and a half the girls wrote and wrote, and then the papers were taken up and they were allowed fifteen minutes for recreation.

“Now,” said Rosamond, “what I would like to know is, are we to have a written examination or is Mr. Dickerson coming in to give us an oral test?”

“Mr. Dickerson is the father of five children,” said Gertrude, “so we need not be in the least afraid of him. He must know that children are not perfect.”

Once more in their seats in the classroom, the girls watched the door eagerly. Would he come or would he not? Suddenly the door opened a crack and then closed again; but a second later it reopened and Bob Angel entered, bearing a message for Miss Donovan. He smiled broadly at the girls as he went out. He felt sure that

the message he had brought would be a welcome one.

Miss Donovan smiled, too, as she announced, "Mr. Dickerson has been called away, and so we will have a written examination."

When at last the Sunny Seven were out under the elm-tree, Rosamond dropped down on the bench, exclaiming, "Well, girls, I don't know how you all feel, but I am limp."

Betty's eyes were shining. "Wasn't Miss Donovan a dear to give us so many i-e words!" she exclaimed joyously. "I almost think that I might as well name the pony."

The next day Miss Donovan announced the result of the examinations, and she said: "First of all, I want to congratulate Betty Burd. Her grammar and spelling were perfect." Then she added kindly, "Betty is to be excused from the test in arithmetic, because she is to be tutored in that subject during the summer, and then

she will be promoted with the rest of the class in the fall."

Such rejoicing as there was when the Sunny Seven were again under the elm-tree. Betty wanted the other girls to go home with her, and so across the meadows they joyously took their way. Into the house Betty danced, shouting, "Mumsie! Mumsie! I passed perfect in grammar and spelling."

"It isn't possible!" exclaimed her delighted and astonished mother, as she hurried from the library, embroidery in hand. But the card which Betty triumphantly produced verified this startling statement.

"Your Uncle George came home early this afternoon," Mrs. Burd said. "He is in the study."

But Mrs. Burd was wrong, for Uncle George, having heard the joyous commotion, knew that it could have but one meaning and was already in the hall.

"Just good enough to be true, Betsy Bobbets," he exclaimed when he had heard

the glorious news. Then Betty, remembering her manners, introduced the six girls, and Rosamond mentally decided that Uncle George was ever so good-looking and not so awfully old either.

“And now,” said that young man gayly, “let’s visit the barn.”

“Oh! Oh!” cried the delighted Betty, “Is that darling pony here this very minute?”

The pony was indeed there, and the girls all gave exclamations of admiration when they beheld him, for even Firefly was not more handsome.

Then each of the seven rode on his back around the circular drive, and Rosamond declared that a rocking-chair could not be more comfortable.

“I ought to name him Spelling or Grammar, I suppose,” Betty declared. “But since he has a white spot on his forehead, I’m going to call him Star.”

Then, when Uncle George had led the pony back to his stall, Mrs. Burd called the

girls to the wide side-porch, which was so attractive and cosy with deep wicker chairs, comfortable cushions, and here and there big drooping ferns on wicker pedestals. When they were seated, Melissy, the colored maid, brought out cold lemonade and little nut-cookies.

“Well,” said Betty with a happy sigh, “I really do not deserve these high marks, for if Uncle George had not bribed me, and if you girls hadn’t encouraged and helped me, I probably would still be spelling ‘believe’ with an e-i.”

“Next year,” Gertrude said wisely, “we will learn our lessons each day as we go along, and then we shall not have to over-study just before the examinations.”

“And now,” Rosamond declared, “since vacation is here, we must plan to give that fudge party which we promised the boys.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN

VACATION DAYS

“Vacation days have come again,
Joyous, glad, and free.
We’ll brim them full of happiness
As ever days could be.”

ADELE sang this little song as she and the Sunny Six skipped across the meadows on that last day after school. Then, parting with her friends at the cross-roads, she went on her homeward way, walking more demurely, since she was now in the village, but her thoughts were dancing as joyously as before.

“I’m so happy, so happy!” she said to herself. “I wish I might share it with some one who hasn’t as much as I have.”

And just as she turned in at the lilac gate, she thought of the some one. Into

the house she skipped, and, pausing in the lower hall, she called eagerly, "Mumsie mine, where are you?"

"Climb the golden stairs, daughter," a sweet voice replied. And up the softly-carpeted stairway Adele tripped, and, dancing into her mother's sunny sewing-room, she threw her arms about the pretty little woman who was busily making buttonholes. Then, sinking down on a near-by stool, she exclaimed, "Adorable Mother, have I been a real good girl this year?"

"Indeed you have," Mrs. Doring replied brightly. And then she laughingly added, "That reminds me of when you were a little girl, Pet, for you always asked that when you were about to request a favor."

"Did I?" Adele inquired with twinkling eyes, as she took off her broad-brimmed, daisy-wreathed hat and fanned her flushed face. Then, laying her head against her mother's knee, she added, "Mumsie, darling, I haven't changed very much, I guess, for I want to ask a great, big, and perfectly

beautiful favor of you. And since I have been so good, don't you think that you might say yes?"

"Oho, Mistress Adele," laughed her mother, "I cannot grant a favor unless I know what it is."

"It's something just ever so nice," Adele said, "and it won't be a mite of trouble to you. I want to invite that orphan girl, Eva Dearman, over to spend Saturday and Sunday. She's just a dear, mumsie, and her home was as nice as ours before her father lost his money and died, and then, soon after that, her mother was taken. Oh, mumsie, when I think how it might have been me, homeless and all alone, I'm so thankful, and yet that makes me all the sorrier for Eva, and I would so like to share my home with her just for two days."

There were tears in Mrs. Doring's eyes as she held Adele close. Then she said: "Do go and get Eva this very moment. I would like to meet your friend."

“Oh, Adorable Mother!” Adele exclaimed as she sprang up. “I fly to do your bidding. I’m sure that Mrs. Friend will be willing to let her come, and won’t Eva be happy, though!”

Adele tossed her school-books into her room as she hurried past, and then down the stairs she flew. Out to the barn she skipped, and soon Firefly was hitched to the little red cart. Adele waved to her mother as she drove out of the lilac gate. She was so happy that, as soon as the village was passed, she just had to sing.

In the orphanage Eva Dearman was patiently helping Amanda Brown with her mending, little dreaming of the joy that was soon to be hers.

Adele drew rein in front of the rambling brick building, and telling Firefly that he should have a lump of sugar if he would stand just ever so still until she came back, into the Home she went.

Mrs. Friend’s cheery voice bade her enter the office, and how the kind matron

beamed when she saw Adele's shining face.

"Why, lassie," she exclaimed, "you look as though the nicest thing imaginable was just about to happen."

"And so it is," Adele replied, "if you will be a kind fairy and grant my wish."

"It is granted," exclaimed Mrs. Friend. "Now tell me what it is."

"I want to borrow one of your children for over Sunday. Mother would have written a note, but she was too busy making buttonholes for the Lend-a-Hands," Adele explained.

"A note is not at all necessary," Mrs. Friend replied. "Which of my children do you wish to borrow? I'm like the old woman who lived in the shoe: I have so many children, I don't know what to do."

"Can't you guess which one I want to borrow?" Adele asked. And the matron smilingly replied, "Indeed I can, and you will find Eva in the sewing-room, I believe."

"Thank you, Mrs. Friend!" the girl ex-

claimed gratefully, and then she tripped down the hall and rapped on a door. Eva herself opened it, and with a little cry of joy she stepped out and exclaimed, "Oh, Adele, I've just been pining to see you."

"Eva," Adele said mysteriously, "you have an invitation. Would you like to accept it?"

Eva caught her friend's hands, and with shining eyes she replied, "Would I? Why, Adele, that's a needless question! Indeed I would! Is it for all of the girls, or is it just for me?"

"Just for you this time," Adele replied, and then she told her what the invitation was.

Tears rushed to Eva's eyes, but through them a radiant smile was shining as she joyously exclaimed, "Am I really and truly to live in your home for two whole days?"

Adele had not thought that it would mean so much to the little orphan.

Half an hour later, Eva, dressed in her

Sunday best and looking radiantly happy, sat beside Adele in the little red cart, and Firefly, having had his lump of sugar, was trotting along in his briskest fashion.

“Oh, Adele,” Eva exclaimed joyfully, “I was having such a hard time to see the sunny side of life this morning, but now just everything sings and glows.”

And Adele, having brought so much joy to another, was radiantly happy herself.

Soon they were turning in at the driveway, and there was Adorable Mother waiting on the porch to greet them. Her heart had been full of tenderness for this orphan even before she had seen her, but when she beheld the slender, graceful girl with soft golden-brown hair, which, though braided, would escape in ringlets, and the sweet blue eyes which looked up at her so yearningly, those mother-arms reached out and held Eva in close embrace.

“Mumsie, dear,” laughed the delighted Adele, “is it manners to hug a young lady before you’ve been introduced?”

“Yes, and kiss her, too,” Mrs. Doring replied, as she kissed Eva’s flushed cheeks, and then she added kindly, “Adele’s friend is very welcome to our home.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Doring,” Eva said, smiling through the tears that would come.

“There now,” Mrs. Doring said briskly, “you two girls skip up-stairs and have a nice visit before supper.”

So up the broad and softly-carpeted stairway they went, hand in hand. Eva gave an exclamation of delight when they entered Adele’s room.

“It’s just like a fairy bower, and I’m so glad that I know the fairy who lives in it.”

It was indeed a pretty room. The wall-paper was the color of pale sunshine, and looped about on it, here and there, were wreaths of wild roses. The window-seat coverings, the curtains, the downy sofa-pillows, all carried out the wild-rose design. There were bird’s-eye-maple furniture, low shelves overflowing with good books, a little

brass bed, its pale yellow spread bordered with wild roses, and the big drooping fern in the sunny bay-window. Surely there never was a cheerier room, nor one better suited to the maiden who dwelt therein.

“I’m glad that you like it,” Adele exclaimed, “and some day I want a picture of you to put in this long frame with my very best friends, the Sunny Six.”

“Do you really?” Eva asked happily. “Oh, Adele, you are so dear and so good to me that it isn’t a bit hard to see the sunny side when you are around. Now if it’s manners, I’m going to poke about and examine your room, just as if I were visiting a museum.”

“Of course it’s manners,” laughed Adele. “I’m very proud of my ornaments. Father’s younger brother is a great traveler, and he has brought me things from all parts of the world. See this blue bowl with the dragon wound about it? A little girl in Japan gave it to Uncle Dixon for me. He said that her name was Wistaria, and

that she looked as though she had just stepped off of a Japanese fan."

"Wouldn't you love to see her!" Eva exclaimed. "I'm so eager to visit Japan some day when the cherry-trees are in blossom, and sit on the floor and drink tea in the funny way that they do."

So with happy chatter the two girls wandered about the room, and Adele told the story of each ornament. Then drawing Eva to the long mirror, she laughingly exclaimed, "And now I will show you the life-sized portrait of two beautiful girls." Eva, looking in the mirror, saw two happy faces smiling out at them.

"Look closely," Adele was saying. "See how true to life the artist has made them. He has even put in the freckles." Suddenly a boy's voice exclaimed from the doorway, "Vanity! Vanity! Thy name is Girl!"

"Oh, Jack Doring!" Adele cried, whirling about. "It isn't any such thing. You were in front of your mirror for ages this

morning, trying on seven different neckties. But, oh, I forgot. Eva, you haven't met my brother Jack, have you? He isn't famous for anything as yet, unless it is for dodging work."

"How do you do, Miss Eva?" Jack said solemnly, as he made a low bow. "Don't believe a word that Sis says. I have acquired fame this very day, of which my small sister knows nothing. I have been appointed Pirate the Terrible, which means that I am now chief of the band of pirates to which I belong; and, by the way, Sis, they are all coming over here this evening to get that fudge which you promised to make for us when we delivered the box."

"Honestly, Jack Doring?" Adele asked. "Why, I don't believe that there's a square of chocolate in the whole house."

"Well, there will be," Jack replied. "You see to inviting the girls and I'll get the chocolate and the walnuts. Mother said that we might have the kitchen to-night."

When Jack had gone his way, Adele hugged her friend as she exclaimed, "It will be a party for you, Eva, and I want you to have just the nicest time." Then, as the supper-bell was ringing, they made ready and went down the stairs, arm in arm.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE FUDGE PARTY

As Adele and Eva entered the big pleasant library, which was living-room for the Dorings, a tall man rose from a deep, comfortable chair, and, laying aside the evening paper, turned to greet them.

“This is my Giant Father!” Adele exclaimed. “Eva, I am introducing you to the nicest man in the whole world.”

Giant Father shook hands with Eva, and was just about to say some kindly word of welcome when the side-door banged, and Jack, cap in hand, appeared before them. “Sis,” he cried, “cast your eye upon this package! Does it look like chocolate enough? And here are the nuts. It took all the money I have earned this month to make these purchases.”

“Earned!” exclaimed Adele. “Doing what?”

“Children! Children!” Mrs. Doring laughingly admonished from the doorway. And then she added, “Come now, since Jack has returned we will have our supper.”

When they were seated at the table, Adele gayly exclaimed, “Yes, Jackie, since we have a guest, let us have peace to-night.”

“I’ll gladly have a ‘piece’ of yonder chocolate mountain,” Jack said, as he waved his hand toward a large cake such as no one could make, so he thought, except their own cook, Kate. And Kate, serving the supper, beamed happily on the brown head of the boy who had been the darling of her heart ever since he had been placed in her arms fourteen years before. It was indeed her chief happiness to make or bake something for her boy, Jack.

The merry supper in such a happy home brought tender memories rushing to the

heart of the orphan girl, but bravely she thought, "I must appreciate what I have and stop grieving for what I cannot have."

When the supper was over Adele drew Eva into a little room near the library. "This is Giant Daddy's den," she said. "Come in and close the door. I want to telephone to the Sunny Six and invite them to the fudge party."

Soon the line was busy, for Adele was holding merry conversations with first one of her friends and then another. Yes, indeed, Betty Burd could come, and wouldn't it be jolly fun!

"What shall I bring?" Peggy Pierce asked. "Just your own sweet self," Adele replied. Bob, Jack's pal, had told Bertha Angel about the party, and she said that she and Gertrude Willis would come together. Doris Drexel lived next door to Adele, so all that she had to do was to crawl through the hole in the hedge.

Rosamond Wright said that she had to take a music-lesson first. Oh, yes, she

would come to the party after that. Why, she wouldn't miss it for worlds, but she *might* be late.

"They can all come," Adele announced, as she arose from the desk on which the 'phone stood, and then, taking Eva by the hand, she dragged her gayly toward the kitchen.

"We'll help Kate do the supper work," she announced, "and then we can be getting the place ready for the party."

With so many helping hands, the room was soon in apple-pie order. Adele explained to Eva about the club to which her brother belonged. "It's the luckiest thing," she declared. "There are just seven girls in our club and there are seven boys in Jack's, so when we give parties we have an even number. Not that we pair off. I don't believe that any of the boys like one girl more than another. They are just our brothers, you see. Of course, being boys, they are not content to have a nice quiet club like ours. Last year they

had been reading Cooper, so they called themselves 'The Mohicans,' and such blood-curdling yells as they could give. Sometimes they would dress up like Indians and paint their faces and swoop down upon us girls when we were in the woods, and, truly, they would frighten us, even though we knew perfectly well who they were. This year they are reading Stevenson, and so their club is The Jolly Pirates. They have elected Jack as their chief, and they call him Pirate the Terrible."

Just then the front-door bell rang and Adele skipped away, soon to return with five girls, all of whom welcomed Eva gladly, and then laughingly they made deep curtsies to Jack, who had just appeared. That good-looking boy, in return, bowed in most courtly fashion.

A few moments later another bell rang, and Adele, opening the side-door, peered out into the gathering darkness.

On the porch stood six boys. The head

of each was covered with a black, shroud-like cloth, and in a melancholy tone they chanted:

“Fifteen men on a dead man’s chest.

Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum.”

“Oh, boys!” Adele exclaimed. “Do take off those dreadful black things! You give me the shivers, even though I do know who you are.”

But the six black figures stood motionless, and then one asked, in a deep, gruff voice, “Is this the home of Pirate the Terrible?”

“Yes, it is,” laughed Adele, “but he isn’t so very terrible just now, for he has on a calico apron and he’s cracking nuts for the fudge.”

Then, to the surprise of the onlookers, the boys jumped up into the air, and, clicking their heels together, they shouted in chorus, “Yo-ho! Jolly Pirates, seize the fudge!” Then, snatching off their black headgear, six laughing boyish faces were

revealed, and Bob Angel cried, "In, my good men, and enjoy the revelry. Rich entertainment awaits you."

"You ought to say, 'In, my *bad* men,' I should think, if you are playing pirates," Adele suggested. Then she added, "Eva, permit me to introduce to you my brother's boon companions, the Jolly Pirates. I won't tell you their names just at first; it would be too confusing. I'll let you learn them gradually. Now, boys, you may sit over here with Jack and crack nuts. And Peggy, you'd better stay near them and see that they put the nuts into the bowl."

"Oh, let's trust to their honor," Peggy gayly replied. Meanwhile Doris Drexel was grating the chocolate, and soon the candy-making was well under way.

"It's strange that Rosie doesn't arrive," Adele said at last. "It's quite dark now, and she may be afraid to come alone. Perhaps —" But before Adele could say another word, some one stumbled up on the side steps, the kitchen door burst open, and

there stood Rosamond with wide, startled eyes, and face as white as a sheet.

“Rosie!” Adele cried in alarm. “What is the matter?”

“I saw a ghost!” Rosamond exclaimed, as she glanced fearfully out of the still open door.

“It must be some one playing a prank,” said Jack, who had risen. Then he added, “Up, Jolly Pirates! Let us fare forth and capture this ghost.”

The fudge, which was already on the buttered tins, was set to cool, and so the girls declared that they would go along. Not one of them believed that Rosie had seen a real ghost, for they all knew that she was timid and imaginative.

Rosie, however, was convinced that she had seen a being supernatural, and so she clung to Adele’s arm fearfully as they went out into the warm night. In the sky were low, gray clouds, which were slowly drifting. Occasionally the moon appeared in a rift, and then it was dark again.

“It will rain before morning,” Dick Jensen said.

“Now, Rosie,” Jack Doring exclaimed, when they were out on the highway, “I am Pirate the Terrible. Lead me to your ghost and I will scare him so that I will make his bones rattle.”

“I saw it in the orchard, right at the cross-roads,” said Rosie.

“Follow me!” Jack commanded. “We’ll take a short cut through the graveyard.”

At that Rosamond stopped and exclaimed, “Jack Doring, you’ll do no such thing. There are tombstones in the graveyard, — you know there are!”

“Of course I know it,” Jack agreed. “But, my dear Rosie, did you ever hear of a stone, tomb or otherwise, taking legs unto itself and pursuing a young lady?”

“No-o,” Rosamond reluctantly admitted. “But graveyards are so scary.”

“We will stay on the high-road,” Adele said, wishing that they had not come, since Rosie seemed really frightened.

The cross-roads was a lonely spot. There had been a pleasant home standing on one corner, but it had recently burned, leaving only a charred ruin and a yawning cellar. In the fitful moonlight this looked very ghostly. Beyond was an old apple-orchard, and on the far corner near the fence stood —

“Look! Look!” cried Rosie, clutching Adele. “There it is! There’s the ghost. Right there — all in white!”

They all stopped and stared, — the girls startled, the boys puzzled, — for, truly enough, a tall, white figure stood silently in front of them. Then suddenly an unearthly scream rang through the air, followed by another from Rosamond.

“That was a screech-owl,” Jack said. “Now, fellows, if you are worthy of the name of pirates, show your courage and let’s at the ghost before Rosie faints.”

“Yo-ho-ho!” the boys shouted as they ran toward the white apparition. Then such a merry laugh rang out!

“Oh, Rosie!” Jack called. “Come, quick, and see what your ghost is.”

No longer afraid, Rosamond went forward with the others. “What is it?” she asked.

“Why, it’s an old tree-trunk,” Bob explained, “and for some reason or other Mr. Wiggin had it whitewashed.”

“Well, it looked like a ghost, anyway,” Rosamond said faintly. How the boys laughed!

“Never mind our fun, Rosie,” Lawrence Collins called; “we’ve surely had an exciting adventure. Now, let’s hike back to the fudge, for I am convinced that it is cool.”

Then the seven boys locked arms and marched ahead of the girls, chanting in loud voices:

“Yo-ho-ho! Fifteen men on a dead man’s chest.”

“I do wish they wouldn’t sing that dreadful song,” Rosie said with a shudder.

Adele laughed as she replied, “I guess that we shall have to put up with it as long as they are playing Pirates.”

“I wonder what they will be next,” Peggy Pierce remarked. “You remember that last year they were Indians.”

“Many of them will be going up to the city in the fall to attend the high school, and so probably this will be their last club,” Gertrude replied.

They were all rather glad to get back into the warm, cosy kitchen.

“Good!” cried Betty Burd. “The fudge is cool. It’s so nice and creamy, and the nuts are just crowding each other.”

Then followed a happy half-hour in which the candy was eaten amidst much joking and laughter. Soon thereafter the Jolly Pirates escorted the Sunny Six to their homes and quiet settled down over the town of Sunnyside.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE TWO DRYADS

It was ten o'clock when Eva and Adele went to their room that night.

“Think of it!” Eva declared with shining eyes. “The orphans at the Home have been in their beds and sound asleep for two long hours. I feel as though I were a grown-up young lady, don't you, Adele?”

“I do, indeed,” Adele replied, “but to-morrow morning we may sleep as late as we wish.”

“Oh, what a treat that will be!” Eva said, as she nestled down in the soft bed. “In the Home we have to be up at six.”

But, for all their resolution to sleep late, both of the girls were wide awake with the robins who lived in the apple-tree nearest

the window. Eva sat up and exclaimed, "Oh, Adele, wouldn't it be lovely on the top of Lookout Hill so early in the morning! I've often wanted to climb up there."

"Let's go!" Adele replied.

An hour later, the two girls, having breakfasted in the kitchen, even Kate, the cook, being still asleep, started out on the highway.

"I left a note at mother's place on the table," Adele said, "and I told her that we might be gone all the morning."

Hand in hand the two girls skipped along the deserted road, through the village and out into the country.

There the dwellers in tree and grass were awake; no laggards were they.

"Good morning to you, little squirrel," Eva called gayly, as a little red creature darted by. Adele noted with pleasure her friend's shining face.

"Good-morning, meadow-lark," she called to a bird which was perched on a fence-post, warbling its cheeriest song.

Then, single file, they tripped over the little brown path which led across the Buttercup Meadows and on up the hill.

“Look at yonder gnarled oak-tree,” Adele exclaimed. “If we rapped upon it, do you suppose a door would open and a girl dryad would appear?”

“Oh!” Eva cried, as she stretched her arms out toward the glistening fields which lay below them. “I almost wish that I *was* a dryad and that I could live forever in the wonderful green out-of-doors.”

“Let’s play that we are dryads,” suggested Adele, who had not outgrown her delight in making-believe.

“Very well,” Eva gayly replied, as she began to unbraid her thick golden hair. “We’ll weave garlands of oak leaves and then we’ll dance on the hill-top.”

“Oh, Eva!” Adele cried admiringly. “You have the prettiest hair that I ever saw. You are like a fairy-tale princess, whose golden tresses hung like a mantle over her shoulders.”

“I’m glad,” Eva said simply. “I want to look nice to you. Now shake down your locks, my nut-brown maid, and I’ll crown you with these oak leaves.”

“We ought to have different names,” Adele declared. “You be Dryad Fern and I’ll be Dryad Oak-leaf.” Then, taking Eva by the hand, she called merrily, “Come, Dryad Fern, let’s sing and dance, where the wild birds wing and the sunbeams glance.”

Away they went, skipping and singing, as graceful and lovely as two dryads could be. On the hill-top, just for the joy of it, Eva whirled about alone, and Adele, breaking a hollow reed, pretended to play upon it, when suddenly a strange voice called, “Lovely! Lovely! How lucky I am to meet two dryads!”

The girls turned and beheld a young woman who was seated in front of an easel. “Good morning, little dryads,” she said, with a pleasant smile. “You see I am painting that oak-tree on the hill-top. I was wishing for a dryad to appear, and lo,

there you were! Now, here you go upon the canvas!”

“Oh, how beautiful!” Eva exclaimed, as she looked at the picture of the hill-top and the gnarled oak and the wide, sunny skies. “If I could paint like that I should be so happy.”

The artist looked at the girl with a bright smile. “Perhaps you could if you tried,” she said. “Have you done any sketching?”

“No,” Eva replied. “I have not had any chance.”

“I believe that you might have talent,” the artist said pleasantly. “I am Madge Peterson, from the city. My young brother and I are spending a fortnight at Little Bear Lake, and if you two dryads will go down to the inn with me, I’ll get my things and we’ll go sketching. How would you like that?”

“We’d love it!” Adele exclaimed, glad to have pleasant things happening, for she did so want this to be the happiest weekend of Eva’s whole life.

Soon the easel and paints were packed and Madge Peterson, who was little more than a girl herself, having just had her eighteenth birthday, beamed on her two new friends as she said, "Come now, little dryads; we will start on our downward way."

"Oh," exclaimed Adele, "I forgot something!"

"What?" asked Madge, looking up brightly.

"My manners," Adele laughingly replied. "Miss Peterson, I never thought to tell you what our names are."

"Why, yes you did," Madge replied gayly. "You are Dryad Oak-leaf and your friend is Dryad Fern."

"Oh, but we change back to girls when we leave the oak-trees," Adele said, as she began to braid her wavy brown hair, while Eva did the same to her golden locks.

"It's a pity," said Madge, who thought that she had never before met two lovelier girls.

“There!” Adele exclaimed when their hats were on. “Now, Miss Madge Peterson, from the city, permit me to introduce to you my friend, Eva Dearman, and myself, Adele Doring, from Sunnyside.”

“I am delighted to meet you,” Madge laughingly declared.

The path they were following was rounding the hill, and suddenly Eva stood still with an exclamation of joy.

“Adele,” she cried, “I didn’t know that there was such a lovely little lake on the other side of Lookout Hill. I have never been in this direction since I came to the Home.”

Poor Eva, suddenly realizing what she had said, blushed crimson, and then she hurriedly explained. “Oh, Miss Peterson, I’m just a girl from an Orphans’ Home, whom Adele is befriending, out of pity, I guess.”

“How can you say such a thing, Eva Dearman!” Adele exclaimed, with flashing eyes, as she put her arm around her friend.

“I love you just as much as I do any of the Sunny Six, and my mother says that it doesn’t matter what clothes we wear or what house we live in; it’s what we are that counts.”

“That is indeed true,” Madge Peterson said kindly. “You are a princess among girls, Eva, and a princess is no less royal because, for a time, she is kept in a dungeon.” Then, to change their thought, Madge exclaimed: “See that sail-boat rounding Pine Island! There’s a merry breeze down there; you can tell by the ripple on the water. Why, whatever has happened? The sail-boat has tipped over. Come, let us hasten down to the shore and see if we can help.”

Hurriedly they scrambled through the berry-bushes to the edge of the lake. The up-turned sail-boat was drifting toward them, and a good-looking lad dressed in white was calmly sitting on the side of it.

“I declare if that isn’t my brother, Everett,” laughed Madge. Then, making a

funnel of her hands, she called, "Ship ahoy!"

The lad, looking toward them, recognized his sister with a joyous shout, and, leaping into the water, he swam ashore and soon stood before them, dripping wet.

"Miss Doring and Miss Dearman," exclaimed Madge mischievously, "may I present to you my young brother, Everett? If I had not claimed him, you might have mistaken him for a white water-rat, if such a creature exists."

Everett made a deep bow as he gayly cried, "Young ladies, may I take you for a sail? My boat will be in directly."

"You may row us out to Pine Island in about half an hour," Madge declared, "and now we'll leave you to your fate."

"My brother is just learning to sail a boat," she explained, as she led the girls toward Little Bear Inn.

"What pretty gardens!" Eva said. "And, oh, what a picturesque, rambling old house!"

The inn was built of rough logs, and all about it stood great old pine-trees, through which the breeze was murmuring.

“I do love pine-trees,” Adele exclaimed. “There’s something so restful about them.”

“I like them, too,” Madge said, as she led the girls across the wide veranda, on which were rustic chairs and tables and green bowls filled with ferns and wild flowers.

Eva thought that she had never seen anything more attractive than the big cool room which they next entered. There were heavy beams overhead, and the furniture was green willow, comfortably upholstered in dark red. There were antlers on the wall, and pictures of deer drinking at the edge of the lake.

“Do look!” Eva exclaimed. “Here is a picture of the darlingest little bear. Oh, Miss Peterson, was the lake named after him, do you suppose?”

“So they say,” Madge replied. “There

is a story about it, which as yet I have not heard.”

Madge excused herself and went to her own room to put away her easel and paints and to get her sketching materials. A moment later she returned with shining eyes. “Little dryads,” she said, “I have a beautiful plan. You don’t have to hurry back, do you?”

“Not if I can let mother know where we are,” Adele replied. “She will be expecting us home about noon, and I do not want her to be worried. We left so early that I haven’t seen her to-day.”

Madge Peterson pointed toward a table in the far corner of the room as she laughingly declared, “Yonder is the modern Mercury, who will gladly carry a message to your mother.”

“Good!” exclaimed Adele when she saw the telephone. “But, Miss Peterson, you have not told me what I am to say to my mother.”

“Ask her if you may stay to lunch with

me and spend the afternoon," Madge replied.

"Oh, how nice that will be," Adele said. "And I am sure that Adorable Mumsie will say Yes."

She was quite right. Mrs. Doring, knowing that she could rely upon Adele's good judgment, readily granted the permission desired.

"I'm so glad," Madge Peterson said gayly. "Now I'll hie me kitchenward and have a basket filled with good things to eat. Then we'll hunt up brother Everett, who is a much better oarsman than sailor, and he will row us out to that lovely Pine Island. It's just an enchanting place for a picnic-lunch, and there are such pretty things to sketch."

The two girls were delighted with this plan, and they little dreamed of the exciting adventures they were to have before they returned.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PINE ISLAND

HALF an hour later the merry trio wended their way again toward the lake. Eva and Adele were carrying a well-laden basket between them, while Madge carried the box of sketching materials. As they neared the boat-house, they beheld Everett, neatly clad in a dry suit of white flannels. By the side of the dock was moored a wide, comfortable-looking boat.

The youth saluted them as they neared the lake, and then sprang to take the basket from the girls. This he stowed in the stern as he exclaimed, "Oh, sister of mine, I do hope that yon wicker receptacle contains about one hundred pies and two hundred doughnuts, a dozen boiled lobsters, and —"

“You may be sure that it doesn’t,” his sister interrupted, “but, to tell you the truth, I am as ignorant of its contents as you are. Ching Ling, the kindly Chinese gentleman who presides over the kitchen at the inn, filled it for me, and as yet I haven’t peeped under the cover.”

“Oh-h!” groaned Everett in pretended dismay. “What if Chingaling gave us fried-mouse sandwiches and —”

“Everett Peterson! We’ll leave you behind if you make any more such terrible suggestions,” Madge threatened.

“Well, that’s what Chinese children eat in their native land, isn’t it?” laughed Everett. “And as for leaving me behind, I’m pretty sure that you won’t do that, as I do not believe that any of you know how to row.”

“I do, a little,” Eva replied, as Everett unfastened the boat. A few strong, swift strokes sent the craft dancing out on the sunny blue lake. Eva, with shining eyes, looked happily about her. Madge and

Adele visited, while Everett, with long strokes, sent the little craft over the sparkling water, and soon the keel grated on the sandy beach of the prettiest island imaginable. It seemed dense with pine trees where they had landed, but at the other end they beheld a rocky point. They had entered a quiet little cove, and, with Everett's assistance, the girls were soon climbing over the bow and then the boat was drawn high on the sand.

“Oh! Oh!” Eva exclaimed to Adele, as she caught her friend's hand. “Isn't this the prettiest place! Adele, pinch me, will you, and see if I am really myself. It doesn't seem possible that only yesterday I was an Orphans' Home girl. To-day I feel like — like Cleopatra, or somebody rich and luxurious.”

“Please don't feel like Cleopatra,” laughed Madge, who had heard the last part of the sentence. “I'd much rather go a-picnicking with Dryad Fern than with that historical lady, if it's all the same to

you. Come now, let's select our banquet-hall, for my small brother declares that he will turn cannibal and eat us if we do not soon spread the viands."

"Look! There's the prettiest place under those two pines that seem to be twins," Adele exclaimed.

"True enough!" said Madge. "And the ground is covered with dry pine-needles." Then, turning to her brother, she gayly called, "My good Man Friday, bring the basket and follow us."

Everett didn't much care what he was called, as long as he was being called to a feast, and so with several long strides he reached the place ahead of the girls.

"Yum! Yum!" he said as he placed the basket on the ground. "Please do hurry and give me some."

"Isn't it fun not to know what is in the basket!" Adele exclaimed, as Madge knelt down and took off the red table-cloth which covered the top.

"A bit of color to enliven the scenery,"

Everett said, as he helped Eva spread the cloth on the ground.

“Now,” Madge exclaimed mysteriously, “within our basket are four square boxes, one apiece. I’ll give you the biggest one, Everett, even if it isn’t manners.”

“Thanks for your generosity,” Everett exclaimed. “I shall eat every crumb which this box contains.”

“Perhaps it’s something which doesn’t crumble,” Adele suggested.

Everett lifted the cover just a crack and peeped under.

“Ha!” he exclaimed mysteriously. “My fondest hopes are realized. To think that I may have the contents of this box all for myself.”

“Oh, Everett, you are so provoking!” Madge cried. “Do let us see what is in it.”

“Very well,” Everett replied. “You may have a look and a sniff if you like, but nary a bite, for there’s just enough here for me.”

The curious girls peered into the box which Everett held out, and Madge joyously exclaimed, "Oh, wasn't Ching Ling just a dear. He has given us four fried chickens, — one apiece. Here are some wooden plates. Everett, you may have the biggest bird, for I do suppose that you are the hungriest, having been for a sail and an unexpected swim this morning. Now, Adele, here's a box for you, and one for Eva."

"Lettuce sandwiches!" Adele announced when she had removed the cover.

"Olives and pickles!" Eva said gleefully when she peered in her box.

"Olives!" sang out Adele. "I just adore them."

"Woe is me!" moaned Everett. "How I wish that I had been born an olive!"

"Everett, do behave yourself and bring us a bucket of fresh water," Madge commanded.

Soon the feast was spread and the tin cups filled with sparkling water, and Ever-

ett's nonsense was stilled only because he was so busy gnawing at the chicken.

When nothing was left but crumbs and bones, Everett exclaimed tragically, "Sister, can it be that Chingaling forgot the dessert?"

"Why, there must be dessert of some kind, somewhere," Madge said as she looked about. "Oho!" she added brightly. "Here is the fourth box. I forgot to open it."

"Do not keep me in suspense," Everett cried. "Is it, can it be, the one hundred oozy pies?"

"No," Madge replied, as she took from the box a chocolate cake with thick frosting.

"Ah, well," said Everett resignedly. "Deeply as I regret the loss of the one hundred pies, I will condescend to accept a piece of chocolate cake. I did not say a crumb," he added, as Madge handed him a slice.

At length the merry meal was over, and the things cleared away. Then Madge ex-

claimed, “Now, Everett, you and Adele may explore the island if you wish, for Eva and I are going to sketch.”

“Come, fair maid!” Everett exclaimed. “We’ll pretend this is a South Sea Island and that we are about to have an exciting adventure.”

That they truly were to have an exciting adventure, they little dreamed.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AN EXCITING ADVENTURE

“ On this little island are pine-trees green.
A nicer little island, I’m sure was never seen,
With a hi-hi-hi, and a ho-ho-ho!
There may be cannibals lurking about;
There are some snakes in the rocks, no doubt;
But if there are, we will scare them out,
We merry explorers, ho!”

EVERETT shouted, as he and Adele started to explore the pretty Pine Island.

“The snakes are more apt to scare us out,” Adele said laughingly, when the lad paused for breath.

Meanwhile Madge selected a spot with a view of the rocky point. One little pine-tree, bent by the wind, stood on the top. Eva, who had longed to learn to draw and paint, and who had covered many a page

with imaginary pictures of fairies and elves, was eagerly waiting for her first lesson. Madge gave her a drawing-board on which a piece of paper was fastened with thumb-tacks, and then she said, "Now, Dryad Fern, you lean back against this stump and sketch for me that pine-tree on the top of yonder rocks."

Then Madge made herself comfortable a short distance away and continued to work on a sketch which she had started the day before.

Adele and Everett, exploring the island, were nearing the upper end, where the ground was rougher and the underbrush more dense.

Thinking to take a short cut to the rocky point, they found themselves deep in a briery tangle of bushes.

"I hope you won't think that I'm overly scary," Adele said, as she stood still, "but I don't like to walk where I can't see the ground, for I might step on a snake."

"Not pleasant to contemplate," Everett

agreed. "But if you will follow close after me, I'll step on him first, and —"

"Hark!" Adele whispered. "I heard a noise in those bushes just ahead of us."

"So did I," said Everett softly. "And, what is more, I saw a strange-looking creature that was trying to slink away. It walked like a man and yet looked like a bear. I am certainly puzzled to know what it can mean, for I am sure that no one lives on this island. If you will stand still here, I will peer over those rocks and see if the creature is there."

Adele, though usually fearless, could feel her heart beating as she stood waiting, while Everett crept, oh, so still, toward the point of rocks. Suddenly he heard a digging noise which came from behind a boulder. Stealing toward it, he cautiously peered over and beheld a sight which made even his brave heart beat quicker. A long-haired man, who was dressed in a bear's skin, was digging in the ground among the rocks with feverish haste.

Suddenly he leaped up into the air, giving animal-like cries of joy. Then out of the hole which he had dug he lifted an iron box, which Everett could see was full of something which glittered.

“I must get the girls away from here at once,” Everett thought, as he stole back to Adele. To her he said hurriedly, “The man is evidently a miser who lives in this wild end of the island.”

Then, as they turned to go back to the place where they had left the others, he added, “Do you know there is something very strange about this? Camping parties are continually coming to Pine Island, and if there were a wild man living here, he would surely be seen by others and the fact become known.”

“That is true,” said Adele. “Then what do you think it may be?”

“I honestly don’t know,” Everett replied; “but having a little of the Sherlock Holmes instinct, I don’t believe that it is just what it seems.”

“Hark!” Adele cried, clutching Everett’s arm. “What was that?”

“It was the report of a gun, and there is another and another! Adele, this is certainly mysterious,” Everett said. “I am going to ferret it out. Will you go back to the girls?”

“I would like to go with you,” Adele replied.

“Then come,” the boy said. “We will creep along the shore and approach the point of rocks from this side.”

The firing had ceased, and there was no noise save the murmuring of the wind in the pines.

Everett led the way up the rocks and Adele followed. Suddenly, as they rounded a huge boulder, Everett stopped and pointed ahead of them. “Look! There is a cave!” he whispered. “This is evidently where the wild man lives.”

But Adele’s gaze was fastened to the point of rocks beyond. Suddenly she burst into a merry peal of laughter.

Everett was indeed puzzled. "Adele," he exclaimed, "why do you laugh?"

"Do you see the flag which is flying on yonder rocks?" she asked.

"Whew!" Everett whistled. "Why, that's a black flag with a skull and cross-bones. Surely the days of pirates are long since passed."

"You are wrong there," Adele replied, no longer afraid, but desiring further to mystify the city lad. "Follow me and I will show you the pirates."

The girl now took the lead, and over the rocks she clambered. Down on the other side was a sheltered cove. Adele peered over and then silently she beckoned Everett to come closer.

The lad's alarm was changed to amusement when he saw, on the shore below, six boys dressed as pirates, with bright handkerchiefs about their heads. One or two of them had earrings hanging from their ears, and each one had a belt containing a knife and a cutlass and a pistol. They

were sitting in a circle around a camp-fire, and the two silent listeners could hear clearly every word that was spoken.

One pirate was talking excitedly. "Shiver my timbers!" he said. "At last we have found what we came for. You remember Ben Gunn, who was left on this deserted island three years ago? Well, this minute I sighted the old sea-dog, hairy and almost bent double, but, dash my buttons, men, if he hasn't found that treasure that we've sailed the seas to get."

Then up rose Pirate the Terrible, and in a roaring voice he issued an order: "Capture the black-hearted scoundrel at once and bring him to me. I'll cut him limb from limb and show him no mercy unless he hands over the treasure."

Then, waving their knives in the air, the five other pirates leaped around the rocks, returning a moment later with the wild man securely tied with ropes.

"Yo-ho!" roared Pirate the Terrible. "So you are Ben Gunn. Three years you

have lived alone on Treasure Island. What did you live on, you black-hearted scoundrel?"

"Goat meat and such," Ben Gunn replied, looking about wildly.

"And what have you been doing?" roared Pirate the Terrible.

"Digging for the buried treasure, and, dash my buttons, I have found it, and we'll all share equal if you'll take me away with you on your ship," the wild man cried eagerly.

"Old Sea-Dog," Pirate the Terrible replied, "you have saved us many days' digging, and so we'll share equal and take you off on the good ship *Hispaniola*."

Then, to the amusement of the on-lookers, the pirates and the wild man began to caper about the fire and sing:

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest.

Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!"

Adele had risen and was stealing away. Everett followed her, glad indeed that their

scary adventure had ended in so harmless a manner.

“Do you know those boys who were playing pirates?” he asked, when they were again on the shore and well out of hearing.

“I do, indeed,” Adele laughingly replied. “I have the honor of being the sister of Pirate the Terrible, but just at first I was certainly scared.”

As they talked, they approached the spot where they had left the others.

“More mystery!” Everett cried. “The girls are not here and the boat is gone.”

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

MORE MYSTERY

WHILE Adele and Everett had been exploring the island, Madge Peterson and Eva had been comfortably seated under the pine-trees, sketching the point of rocks. At first Eva had felt shy and embarrassed, but when she found that Madge was not watching her, she lost her self-consciousness and began to draw, and when the sketch was finished she laughingly exclaimed, "I really ought not to show it to you. I'm afraid I never shall make an artist."

"Indeed you will," Madge replied brightly. "You have natural talent, and now I have a beautiful plan to suggest. Have you a guardian or any one especially interested in you?"

Eva shook her head sadly. "No one," she replied simply.

"Then the matron of the Orphanage is the one whom I must ask if I wish to obtain permission for you to do something, is she not?" Madge questioned.

"Yes, Mrs. Friend is the only mother I have, but she is truly kind. Every one is kind. Adele has been just like a sister, and now you —"

"I hope that you will let me be your friend," Madge Peterson said. "I sincerely believe that you have a talent for drawing which ought to be cultivated, and if Mrs. Friend is willing I would like you to come to the city every Saturday morning and attend the Art Institute."

"Miss Peterson!" Eva cried, with glowing eyes. "How wonderful, wonderful that would be!"

"We'll have beautiful times," Madge exclaimed, "and I feel sure that Adele has a talent which she, too, would like to cultivate, and you could come together."

“Adele writes verses,” Eva exclaimed joyously. “She can even make up rhymes while she is talking, and —”

“Beg pardon, miss,” a strange voice interrupted. “Would you loan me your boat for half a minute? Mine broke loose and is drifting out into the lake. I’d be back with both of them in no time, and be ever so much obliged.”

Madge, looking up, saw before her a weather-browed, kindly-faced fisherman, and so she replied pleasantly, “Yes, do take the boat. We will not need it for half an hour at least.”

Then, rising, she said to Eva, “Now, Dryad Fern, let us wander about a bit. I want to show you a pretty view from the other side of the island.”

And so it chanced a few moments later, when Adele and Everett arrived on the scene, they could find neither the girls nor the row-boat.

“Well, this is strange!” Everett exclaimed. “But I believe that it will turn

out to be as harmless a mystery as the other.”

“Hark!” Adele said. “I hear the girls calling, and there they come now.”

“Madge, what has become of our boat?” Everett inquired, and Madge, for answer, pointed out toward the lake, where Everett saw two boats approaching the shore. A fisherman was rowing a rather rough-looking craft and towing their own. Madge explained how it had happened, and the lad went down to the water’s edge to assist at the landing.

“Thank ye,” said the fisherman, as he tossed the painter of the little craft to Everett. “Strangers from the city, I take it,” he added, as he looked at the youth’s white flannel suit, with a twinkle under his shaggy eyebrows. “What would ye think now, if ye’d lived on Little Bear Lake, as I have, for upward of fifteen year, and not been away from it?”

“Oh, then you must know the story of the Little Bear!” Eva exclaimed eagerly.

“We saw a picture of him over at the inn.”

“Know the story? I should say I do! Why, little gal, that bear was a good friend of mine and the Kid’s. If ye’ve time to row over to my shack, I’ll show ye Little Bear’s skin and tell ye the tale about him. I live in that clump of trees on the mainland yonder.”

“We’d love to go,” Madge replied.

“All aboard!” Everett called, and soon the two boats were crossing the lake.

In a grove of pine-trees the rude shack stood. A three-legged stool was in front of the door through which the party entered. There was very little furniture in the one room, only things that were absolutely necessary, and those were home-made, it was plain to see. Over a rustic bed an Indian blanket was thrown. Three-legged stools, a table, and a stove completed the furnishings.

“I cook on a camp-fire mostly,” the fisherman said. “Stoves are too civilized for the like o’ me, but when it’s winter that

stove comes into its own. Many a blustery night Little Bear and I would come in chilled to the bone, and we'd make a crackling fire in that rusty old stove, and glad we were to have it, I kin tell ye!"

"Oh!" cried Eva. "Did Little Bear live right here with you? Weren't you afraid of him? I thought bears were ferocious and ate people up."

"Well," said the old fisherman, "I s'pose there are ferocious ones, maybe, but to my thinking there's no creature more good-natured and kindly-intentioned than a bear. He won't fight a man unless he sees that the man means to harm him, and the bear's in the right to fight then, I should say."

A brown bear-skin was nailed on the wall of the shack. Smoothing the rough fur, the old man said tenderly, "And this here skin is all that's left now of Little Bear. Sit down, and I'll tell ye the story."

"Let's go outdoors under the pines," Madge suggested, and so out they went.

The weather-tanned old man sat on the three-legged stool, and the four young people made themselves comfortable on the soft pine-needles which formed a thick carpet under the trees.

“Many years ago,” the fisherman began, “no white men lived on this lake, — just Injuns and bear and deer. But one summer a lumber-camp was started where the inn stands to-day, and upwards of twenty white men, armed with axes and guns and knives, built log huts about and began to live in them. The lake shore in those days was covered with great pine-trees, and the concern that owned them wanted them cut down for lumber, but the Injuns had a notion that they owned those pine woods themselves, and many a hard fight there was between the reds and the whites, but the guns beat the arrows in the end, and the Injuns moved away farther north. Bear and deer were thick in those days, and the lumbermen had plenty to eat and all the fish they wanted when they took

time to catch them. After a while other white men came and started sheep-raising and farming. They were always big, husky men, who were used to roughin' it, but one day a covered wagon arrived, and in it was a man and a woman and a baby.

“The man looked pale and sick-like. He'd come to the woods for his health, he said. He offered the wood-cutters all the money he had if they would give food to his wife and child. He himself wasn't long for this earth, he said, and he was right, for he died that night.

“Those rough men were sorry enough for the woman, and they made her as comfortable as they could. They let her have one of the huts to live in. She tried to pick up strength for the child's sake, but she just couldn't do it, and a week later she went to join her man. Then there was that baby boy left in the lumber-camp. The rough men didn't know what to do with the kid. Some were for sending him to the nearest settlement, ten miles away, but

one of them had had a kid of his own once, and he said he'd look out for the young one, so, after that, the men called Jock Henderson the kid's foster-father.

“I'm slow coming to the bear, maybe ye think, for it's my way to begin at the beginnin', but prick up yer ears, for the bear is soon coming.

“Kid Henderson, as they called the baby, was a jolly little fellow, and when the men came home from their work, he toddled around and teased to be tossed up into the air, so one big man and then another would bounce the Kid, and how he would squeal and laugh! Somehow or other, those rough men kept things tidier after that, for having a Kid around made it seem more like home. And, too, they were careful how they talked, — never said a hard word in that baby's hearing. Truth was, Kid Henderson had crept right into the hearts of those rough lumbermen, and, though not one would have said it, they all loved him like he was their own. That's why they

was so frantic-like when the Kid was stolen. Did the Injuns steal him? Well, wait and you shall hear.

“As I said, the men had all the deer and bear and fish they wanted to eat, but there was one Irishman, Pat Mahoney, who had a hankering for bacon, and bacon he was going to have, he said, if he took a week off to get it. The long and the short of it was that Pat built a pig-pen out of logs, and then he rode to the nearest settlement and came back with a litter of little squealing pigs that were just old enough to get on without the sow. Of course that was a good ways from having bacon, but Pat said those porkers would be good to eat by winter, and, as it was then early spring, the men were willing to believe him. Kid Henderson went wild over those little pigs, and if he had been let, he would have spent all his time in the pen, rolling about and playing with them. And now here comes the bear, not Little Bear, I’ll agree, for it was a huge, big bear that came prowling

around the lumber-camp one night, and, smelling pork, he calmly reached over the fence and carried off one of the little pigs. Pat Mahoney was mad, I kin tell ye. He set a trap for old Bruin, but no use, and the next night another little pig was missing.

“Then Pat decided to set up and watch and shoot the intruder when he came prowling around, but something happened before night which made all the men forget about the pigs.

“They always put the Kid in the main hut and barred the door on the outside when they went away to the woods to work, but at noon Jock Henderson would ride back and get the Kid’s lunch and put him to bed for his afternoon nap. The Kid was used to being left alone and he didn’t make a fuss, — just played around on the floor with the rough toys the men had made for him.

“Well, the noon of the day after the second pig had been stolen, Jock Henderson

went home the same as usual, but when he got near, he saw that the hut-door was standing wide open. This was curious, being as the men had barred it on the outside so's the Kid nowise could open it.

“Jock sprang into the hut and looked all around. The Kid wasn't there! ‘Injuns!’ Jock thought on the instant, but his heart went cold when he saw what the tracks really was. Not Injuns. No, sir; they war bear-tracks! Looked as though a big bear had stood up to scratch his back on the rough bark of that door and had pushed off the bar. Then, of course, the door had opened and Jock Henderson knew the rest. The big bear had gone off with the little Kid, just as it had with the pigs.

“Jock leaped on his horse and followed the bear-tracks. There'd been a rain the night before and the tracks was easy to find. They led up into the hills. Jock knew he was running an awful risk, going right up into the bear's den, especially if it was a mother-bear with young; but Jock

didn't care anything about his own life if he could only save the Kid. He tied his horse in a pine wood because most horses won't go anywhere near a bear, and then, taking his gun, he started through the brush and slowly made his way up the hill.

"He lost the bear-tracks when the ground became rocky, and he was just going to change his course when he heard a low growl. Instantly Jock whirled in that direction, and he saw a huge bear rearing up to its full height and ready to attack him. There were no trees around, and Jock knew that his only safety lay in hitting the bear's heart. If he missed, the enraged critter would plunge on him and tear him to pieces.

"Jock Henderson was a good shot, but his nerve was pretty much shaken. He took aim and fired. The bear stood so still for a second that Jock feared he had missed it entirely, but in another moment the big fellow fell in a heap on the ground.

"Then Jock looked about for some sign

of the little Kid, but he didn't find any. Maybe he'd come too late, he was just thinking, when suddenly he saw something which brought tears of joy into his eyes. He had rounded a heap of rocks, and there, in the doorway of a cave, lay the Kid, with his head on the woolly back of a little brown bear, and they were both sound asleep. The old mother-bear had spared the life of the little child, as bears often do, and a feeling of tenderness came into Jock's heart for the poor mother-bear, but of course he had to kill her to save his own life.

“Then the lumberman took a strap from around his waist and he made a muzzle, which he put over the nose of the sleeping cub. Then he lifted the boy on one arm and took the tiny cub under the other, and down the hill he went. The small bear was soon awake and struggling for its freedom. Then the Kid woke up, and finding he was safe in his foster-father's arms, he said: ‘Nice bear took Kiddie. Nice bear didn't hurt Kiddie.’

“Meanwhile the other men wondered why Jock did not return to the woods that afternoon, and they was all anxious and watching for him when he appeared with the Kid and the little cub bear. When they heard the story, many an eye was wet, and the Kid had to tell over and over how the nice bear took him, but ‘nice bear didn’t hurt Kiddie,’ he would always say with that winnin’ smile of his.

“Right then and there the men made up their minds that there wouldn’t anything get another chance to steal their Kid, and after that they never left him alone again. If it was fair weather, he was taken to the camp, and he liked nothing better; while in bad weather the men took turns staying behind and lookin’ after him, and so the years passed and the little boy and bear grew up together. Then something happened,” said the old man with a far-away look in his eyes. “Well, like as not it was best that it did.”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE LITTLE BEAR

“WHAT was it that happened?” the listeners asked eagerly.

“Well, if ye’re not tired of the story,” the old fisherman said, “I’ll tell ye the rest of it. The men had decided that since the mother-bear had been so good to their Kid, they’d be good to her little cub, so they adopted him, and the bear and the Kid grew up together like two brothers.

“Little Bear was soon as tame as a puppy, and though he grew some, he never became as big as his mother. Little Bear he was always called, and how he did love the Kid! When the boy was seven years old, the men put together and bought him a small horse and a rifle, but wherever he went, Little Bear ambled after him.

“The men had built a log raft, which they pushed about with poles, and, when the lake was calm, often the Kid and the bear would sit on the raft, and the boy would fish. Sometimes the Kid would catch a fish that wasn’t good to eat. However, Little Bear wasn’t as particular as folks, but he wouldn’t touch a fish until the Kid tossed it over to him and called, ‘Little Bear, here’s a fish for ye!’ Then he would snap it and gobble it up in a hurry.

“Kiddie never had any other playmate except just Little Bear, and he never seemed to want any. Nights after grub, when the men were all sitting around, swapping yarns and smoking, Little Bear would curl up on the ground and the Kid would lie there with his head on the bear’s back. How the Kid loved to hear their yarns, and the men made them pretty exciting, just to amuse him.

“That winter a man came to the camp with a fiddle. Then ’twas that the fun began. The bear took to music like a duck

to water, and he just couldn't lie still while that fiddle was being played. He up on his hind-legs and galloped about like he was trying to dance. That gave the Kid the idea of teaching Little Bear to do tricks, and he learned them easy. Sometimes the Kid would take hold of Little Bear's paws while the fiddle was being played, and they would both dance about, and how the men would shout to see them! Those were happy evenings in the lumber-camp, happy for the men and for the Kid and the Little Bear. A fine lad the boy had grown to be, — tall and slim, with frank blue eyes looking straight at you out of that handsome, weather-tanned face of his, — and not a bad word did he know, and that was saying a good deal, bein' as he was raised in a lumber-camp with rough men. True, Kid hadn't any learnin' 'cept what he'd picked up watchin' and studyin' nature's ways, that is, he didn't have any till Fiddler Fritz came; he taught him to read out of a book which he always lugged around in his

pocket. Poems, he called it, — stories of knights and ladies. Soon the Kid could read them aloud, but Jock never saw no sense in the story, but he was powerful proud because his Kid could read.

“One evening Fiddler Fritz sat smoking, thoughtful-like, and all of a sudden he said: ‘Jock Henderson, unless I miss my guess, that Kid of yours comes of a mighty good family. Maybe ye ought to be looking them up. Maybe ye’re keeping the Kid from getting a good education and a start in life.’

“Jock Henderson’s heart turned cold inside of him. He’d thought the same plenty of times, but he couldn’t bear to part with the Kid. Jock saw that Fiddler Fritz was expecting an answer, and so he said: ‘The Kid’s mother was a lady; anybody could see that. She only lived a week after her man died, but she wrote a letter to some brother she had who was rich, she said. He’d been angry with her for marrying, and so, maybe, that’s why he never answered her letter. Anyhow, he never did.

I mailed it myself the day after the woman died, and I wrote on the envelope that we'd keep the child till called for, so I guess nobody's a better right to keep the Kid than I have.'

"Now, just as Jock Henderson finished speaking, there came a rap on the door, and Jock said, the minute he heard it, he as good as *knew* that it was somebody come to take his Kid away. It had to be a stranger anyhow, for nobody living in those parts stopped to rap.

"Jock could hardly open the door, his hand shook so. There stood a tall, gray-haired man, and by his clothes Jock knew he was from the city. Near by another man held the bridles of two horses.

" 'How do ye do, sir,' the stranger said pleasantly. 'I have been abroad for many years, and on my return, last week, I found this letter in my desk. Can ye explain it to me?'

"It was the letter Jock had mailed the day after the boy's mother had died.

“ ‘Are ye the Kid’s uncle, then?’ Jock asked, and his voice trembled.

“ ‘I am the brother of the woman who wrote that letter,’ the man replied. ‘If she had a son, I would like to see him.’

“ ‘Jock looked down toward the lake. He knew that the Kid had gone walking along the shore, as he often did at sunset, with Little Bear close at his heels.

“ ‘There he comes now,’ Jock said, as he pointed. And the man, turning, saw a graceful, bare-headed and bare-legged boy leaping along just for the joy of it, while Little Bear, who was full-grown by then, was lumbering along, trying to keep up with him.

“ ‘I beat ye, Little Bear!’ the boy cried; and then, seeing that there were strangers in front of the shack, he stood still and put one arm about the bear’s neck.

“ ‘The strange man seemed to choke up like. Probably he had been powerful fond of his sister before he got angry at her. At any rate, he went toward the boy and

said, 'My lad, I am your mother's brother; and so I am your uncle.'

"Jock feared that, since the boy wasn't brought up to meet strangers, he might act shy-like, but blood tells, and the Kid stepped up with his frank smile and held out his hand as he said, 'I thought, sir, that you might come to see me some day.'

" 'I've come to take you home with me, my lad,' the stranger said. But the Kid looked up quickly, as he replied: 'Why, sir, I don't believe that Jock Henderson could spare me. He's been all the father I've ever had, sir.' And then, to Jock's delight, the boy ran to the rough old man and caught hold of his hard knotted hand and held it tight.

" 'Then it's you I have to thank for making my sister's child into such a fine, manly lad, as I can see at one glance that he is,' the stranger exclaimed. 'I won't take him away from ye, entirely, Jock Henderson, that I will not. He shall go to the city for his schooling, but it's only ten miles away,

and every week-end he can come riding back to visit ye. How would that do, my lad?’

“But it was Jock Henderson who answered. ‘That will be a first-rate plan, Kid,’ he said. ‘I’ve been wanting you to get an education, and all the week I’ll be waiting for Saturday to come, and so will Little Bear here. He’ll be as lonesome as I’ll be, won’t ye, Little Bear?’ Jock asked, trying to be cheerful-like.

“And that is what happened. The next day the Kid rode away on his own small horse, which had been his gift one Christmas from all the men. Lightning, the Kid called him, on account of his speed, and he loved him next to Little Bear.

“That was five year ago, and now every Saturday, as sure as the day dawns, the Kid comes riding down to Little Bear Lake toward evening, to spend Sunday with old Jock Henderson.

“The lumber-camp was moved north the year after the Kid left, and all the men

went away except Jock Henderson. He had saved enough money to live on, and there was plenty of fish and game, and so he built him a little shack up the lake shore and he and Little Bear settled down to keep house together. Then the inn was built over where the lumber-camp had been, and summer people began coming. They all loved Little Bear, and many a sweetmeat he got there, but one day he ate poison, it seemed like. He moped about all day Saturday, and when the Kid came, Little Bear dragged over to him and put his head against the boy, and so he died. The Kid cried just like a child, and no wonder, for Little Bear had been his only playmate, just as Jock Henderson had been his only father."

"Where is Jock Henderson now?" Madge asked, with tears in her eyes.

"He's telling the story to ye," the old man said simply.

"I thought so," Madge replied.

Then the old man continued, "The Kid's

right name is Eric Brownley. He's fifteen years old now and preparin' for college."

"What!" cried Everett Peterson, springing up. "You don't mean to tell me that this is the life-story of our Eric Brownley! Why, he's our champion in all the school-games."

"Sure he is!" said the old man, with shining eyes. "To-day's Saturday, you know, and I've been a-watching for him, and, unless I'm mistaken, here he comes now!"

The young people looked eagerly in the direction toward which the old man pointed, and they saw a horse and rider coming on a gallop.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A FISH SUPPER

THE lake road was only a stone's throw from the shack, and the boy on horseback was soon at the shore.

“Hello, Daddy Jock!” he cried before he noticed that there were others with his foster-father. Leaping to the ground, he gave an exclamation of pleased surprise, as he cried, “Why, Petey, old man, are you here? I thought you were off somewhere cramming for the entrance examinations.”

The two lads shook hands, but not until Jock Henderson had had a warm hand-clasp from his boy. Everett Peterson laughingly replied, “That’s why I’m down here, Eric. Nice quiet place to study, don’t you think so? But let me do the honors. Miss Peterson, Miss Doring, and

Miss Dearman, permit me to introduce you to the scapegrace of our school.”

Eric smilingly bowed to the girls, as he gayly replied, “ ‘I deny the allegation and I defy the alligator,’ but I am truly pleased to meet three fair maidens in our pine woods.” Then, turning to the old man, who stood proudly watching him, he exclaimed, “Daddy Jock, you haven’t a dog-biscuit or any little thing like that around, have you? I’m so hungry that I could eat more than old Giant Blunderbuss.”

“We would better be going,” Madge declared, “and then you and Mr. Henderson can have your supper.”

“Don’t go, Miss,” Jock Henderson said. “I had great luck this day,— caught a fine mess of trout,— and if you’ll stay we’ll cook them over the camp-fire.”

“I’d powerfully like to accept that invitation!” Everett exclaimed.

Madge turned to the girls. “Adele,” she said, “could you and Eva remain longer?”

Adele glanced at her little wrist-watch as she replied, "It's nearly five now, and I ought to be home by six."

"We'll get you there," Eric declared. "That is, if home isn't more than a million miles away."

"Not a million, quite," Adele laughingly replied. "We live in Sunnyside. Three miles, I think they call it."

"No distance at all," replied the youth. "I'll put you both on the back of my trusty brown steed and we'll have you there by six surely. Now, Daddy Jock, show us the fish!"

"Lads, gather the wood and make a fire," Jock said, "and I'll have the fish cooked before any of ye have time to starve."

Then what a merry scurrying there was! Eric and Everett soon had a crackling fire in the circle of stones where a fire was often made, and then, when it had burned down and there was nothing left but red-hot coals, the fish were cooked a delicious



Eric and Everett soon had a crackling fire.—Page 210.

brown. Eric brought from the shack thick plates and steel knives and forks. These he handed to the girls with many flourishes.

“Sit ye down anywhere!” Jock called. “Ladies to be served first, and these speckled beauties are done to a turn.”

“Oh-h!” Madge exclaimed, when a tempting brown fish was laid on her plate. “Am I supposed to eat a whole one?”

“Wait till you see me eat a whole twenty,” Eric remarked, as he gave a fish to Adele and another to Eva. Then, bringing out bread and butter and filling their tin cups with sparkling water from a spring, Eric exclaimed, “Now, having filled the immediate wants of our fair guests, I’ll hie me over to the small whale that I see waiting upon my plate.”

“I never, never tasted fish cooked to such perfection!” Madge declared.

A merry meal it was, and when at last there was nothing left but bones, Adele looked at her wrist-watch and then sprang up, exclaiming: “It’s quarter to six. We

never can walk to Sunnyside in fifteen minutes!"

"Hark!" cried Eric. "I hear an automobile plunging madly down the lake road. Come on, Petey. Let's hold them up, whoever they are, and command them, at the point of the gun, to take our fair guests to their destination."

Snatching up a rifle which stood leaning against the shack, he emptied the barrel as he ran toward the road. The machine had not yet turned the curve, and when it did, the driver was indeed surprised to see two highwaymen standing in the middle of the road, but their laughing, boyish faces showed that they were not very dangerous. Beside the driver a young girl was seated. When the car had slowed down, Eric exclaimed, "Kind sir, if you are going to Sunnyside, we have passengers for you."

Just then Madge and the two girls emerged from the pine trees, and Adele joyously cried, "Oh, it's Betty Burd and her Uncle George. Mr. Wainwright, would

you mind if we rode with you into town? Mother is expecting us home by six."

"Why, Adele Doring!" Betty exclaimed before her uncle could reply. "You know we're glad to have you."

Then Adele introduced her friends, and Betty asked, "Miss Peterson, wouldn't you like to ride with us?"

"Why don't you, Sis?" Everett exclaimed. "It won't take but a moment for Mr. Wainwright to stop at the inn, and then I'll stay a spell with my old friend here."

"Bully! I wish you would!" Eric cried, clapping his hand on his friend's shoulder. So when the car started again, the three smaller girls were seated on the wide back-seat, while Madge Peterson sat with the driver.

Mr. Wainwright drove slowly, because, as he explained, the lake road was in rather poor condition. Adele, hearing this, smiled, for the car had been plunging along when the boys had stopped it.

“Miss Peterson,” Betty’s Uncle George said, with his pleasant smile, “I have met you before, haven’t I?”

“Have you? Where?” Madge glanced up inquiringly, and then she exclaimed, “Oh, yes, I know — at Dora Pendleton’s Musical Tea.”

“And you had some drawings exhibited that day,” Uncle George continued. “I remember that I thought they were excellent.”

Madge smiled, as she said, “I truly did not want to have them exhibited, but Dora Pendleton knew that I was eager to do some illustrating, and she said that several writers would be among the company, and that it might be a good plan to show them samples of my work.”

“A splendid plan!” Uncle George said warmly. “And I am sure that you received an order.”

“I did, indeed!” Madge exclaimed enthusiastically. “And such an interesting one it has proved. Miss Kimberly, the

children's poet, was there, you remember, and she has asked me to illustrate her book of fanciful child-verse. I am having the most beautiful time making the drawings, and, besides that, it pays well and I need the money."

Adele was surprised to hear this, as she had supposed that Madge Peterson had no need to earn money. When the inn was reached and farewells had been exchanged, Madge called, "I'll be at the Home on Monday, Eva," and then the car sped on. Little did the three girls dream of the wonderful something that was going to happen because of that lake-shore ride.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A TRIP TO THE CITY

WHEN Eva Dearman awoke on Monday morning in her little iron cot-bed in the orphanage dormitory, somehow she did not see things plain and unattractive, as they really were. There was such a joyous anticipation in her heart that even the dull gray morning seemed aglow. She met Amanda Brown in the hallway and gave her a sudden hug, as she exclaimed, "I have had the loveliest time, Mandy. Did you miss me just a little bit?"

Amanda clung to her friend, as she sobbed: "Oh, Eva, don't go away and leave me again. It's just like funerals all the time when you are gone. Everybody else is so horrid to me. I tried being nice, the

way you asked me to, and then the girls said I was aping after you, and they called me Miss Dearman.”

“Well, it’s just a mean shame!” Eva cried, with flashing eyes. “How girls can take pleasure in being unkind is more than I can understand. But don’t cry, Amanda! There’s half an hour yet before classes; let’s run to the woods and back.”

All that day it was hard for Eva to keep her mind on her work, for had not her wonderful artist-friend said that she would call at the Home on Monday! And so Eva was continually expecting to be called to the office. Would Mrs. Friend allow her to accept the drawing-lessons? she wondered.

Never did a day pass more slowly, and, for the first time since she had been there, Eva’s recitations were poor, but the teacher, Miss Bently, loved Eva, and was very patient with her. At last there came a rap on the class-room door and Eva held her breath. Who would it be? Perhaps

Mrs. Friend would bring Madge Peterson to visit the class-room, but it was only a little girl with a note. Miss Bently read it and then glanced up with a smile. She believed that she now understood her favorite's mental preoccupation.

"You are to go to Mrs. Friend's office, Eva," she said, kindly. "You have a visitor."

The girl's face glowed as she went toward the door. In the office Madge Peterson was seated. She arose as Eva entered, and, taking both her hands, she exclaimed: "Eva, I have splendid news for you! Mrs. Friend is pleased with our plan, and you may come to the city next Saturday morning and spend the day with me."

"Oh, Mrs. Friend!" Eva cried joyously. "How can I ever thank you!"

"It is Miss Peterson whom you must thank, Eva," Mrs. Friend replied.

"I do indeed thank her," the girl exclaimed, with shining eyes. "And I hope I shall become such a famous artist that

she will feel repaid for her interest. Shall you be very much disappointed if I don't, Miss Peterson?"

"Indeed I shall not," Madge laughingly replied. "I never expect to acquire fame myself, but I do get a great deal of pleasure from my sketching, and now and then I am asked to do a bit of illustrating and so earn extra pin-money, or Roberty-Boberts money, I should say. Some day you must meet little Bob, Eva. You will just love him."

Then Madge expressed a desire to look about the orphanage and the matron asked Eva to show her friend the building and the grounds. What a happy hour it was for that orphan girl! and Madge, who was patroness of another orphanage, took great interest in seeing how this one was conducted.

Then, arm in arm, these two friends sauntered to the front gate. There stood a little olive-green car, which Eva thought was the prettiest she had ever seen.

“I like it,” Madge exclaimed, “but Brother Everett makes fun of it. His car is as big a one as he could find, and when they stand together in the garage Everett says they look like a giant and a pigmy, so I have named my car Pigmy, and we are the best of comrades. Some day, Eva, you shall go riding with me.”

Then Madge was gone. She wanted to visit Adele’s mother and make further plans for Saturday.

Was ever a week so long? the orphan girl wondered, but at last Saturday dawned bright and sunny. Eva awakened with the feeling that something wonderful was going to happen, and then she remembered! Leaping from her little cot-bed, which was the last of a long row, she looked out of the open window and up at the sky. How gleaming and blue it was! and out in the orchard the birds were singing their happy morning-songs. Eva wished that she too might sing, but even then the dressing-bell was ringing, and the nineteen other or-

phans who slept in that dormitory were tumbling out of their beds.

“Good morning, Amanda,” Eva said softly to the girl who slept in the cot next her own.

“Good morning,” Amanda replied, but she turned quickly away. She did not want Eva to see that she had been crying in the night.

At breakfast the orphans were allowed to talk, and Eva chattered like a magpie, making every one near her bright and happy, but not once did she tell about her trip to the city, because she did not want the other girls to feel that she was having pleasures which they could not share.

When the orphans had gone about their Saturday-morning tasks, Eva went up to the dormitory to put on her pretty white dress. When she was ready to go, she slipped her mother’s picture out of its hiding-place and whispered, “Oh, mumsie, dear, everybody is so kind to your little girl. Aren’t you glad?”

Then down the stairs she skipped, and there was Adele Doring waiting for her in the hall.

“What do you think?” Adele exclaimed. “We have an invitation to ride into town with Bob Angel and Brother Jack. They were going in to see a ball game on the high-school campus, and mother said that we might ride in with them.”

“Will wonders never cease?” Eva said, joyously. “I adore riding in autos and I almost never have the chance.”

Mrs. Friend stepped out of her office and greeted Adele. Then she looked over her young charge, to see if all the buttons were in the right holes, for Eva was so excited that she could not keep her mind on ordinary things.

“Have you a clean handkerchief, dear?” Mrs. Friend asked. Eva felt in her pocket. It was empty. “I’ll run back and get one,” she said. “I won’t be half a jiffy.”

Up the stairs she fairly flew and into the dormitory she danced. Suddenly she

stopped. She heard some one crying. On the bed next to her own a girl was lying, sobbing as though her heart would break. It was Amanda Brown. Eva flew to her friend, and, putting her arms about her, asked: "Mandy, dear, what is the matter? Has some one been mean, horrid, to you?"

"No-o!" sobbed the girl. "Oh, Eva, I thought you were gone! Please, please don't let me spoil your day."

"Mandy," Eva said firmly, "tell me why you are crying! I shall stay here until you do."

Amanda knew that Eva meant what she said, and so she replied brokenly, "It's — it's my birthday, Eva, and nobody cares."

Tears rushed to Eva's eyes, and she held her friend close. She remembered how lonely she had felt on her birthday, when she thought that nobody cared.

"I care, Amanda Brown," Eva exclaimed sincerely. "You wait here a moment. I'll be right back." And before Amanda could prevent it, Eva had left the

dormitory. Down the stairs she went more slowly, and the two watching from below wondered at her changed expression.

“Mrs. Friend,” Eva said, “I can’t go to the city! It is Amanda Brown’s birthday, and she will be so unhappy if I go away and leave her. I know how I felt when I thought that nobody cared about my birthday.”

“Oh, Mrs. Friend!” Adele exclaimed. “Couldn’t we take Amanda Brown with us? I know Miss Peterson would be so glad to have her.”

Mrs. Friend readily consented, so Eva hurried back to the dormitory with the news, and when Amanda tried to refuse, insisted that she would remain at home unless her friend would go with them.

In less time than it seemed possible, Eva had Amanda dressed in her Sunday best, and the three girls hurried down the gravelly walk to the gate. Bob Angel leaped to the ground and threw open the door of the car with a flourish. “Good

morning, ladies," he said. "Jack is your chauffeur and I am your footman."

"My! What a grandness!" Adele laughingly exclaimed as the lad helped them into the car.

Then such a joyous ride as they had! They had to take off their broad-brimmed hats, and the fresh wind soon blew the tear-stains from Amanda's cheeks, and left there such a rosy color that the other two girls, looking at her, thought that she would be truly beautiful if only she was loved and made happy.

CHAPTER TWENTY

AMANDA BROWN

THE ride, which Amanda Brown wished would last for hours, was quickly over, for the city was only ten miles away, and very soon the speed had to be slackened as they entered the busy streets.

“Here is Miss Peterson’s address,” Adele said, as she handed Jack a slip of paper.

“Nice neighborhood that,” Bob commented as he read it. It was indeed a nice neighborhood, as the girls decided when, a few moments later, they turned off of the noisy streets and found themselves in a place so quiet that it seemed like the village of Sunnyside. There was a small park, green with grass and trees, around which stood handsome brown-stone houses. Adele

was puzzled. If Madge Peterson lived in one of these, what could she have meant by saying that she needed to earn money with her drawing? Adele had not heard of Roberty-Bob.

Jack had stopped the car at the curb, and Adele laughingly said, "Our footman ought to go up and ring the bell."

"Very well, Miss Doring," Bob gayly replied. "Your footman will do your bidding."

So out of the car the lad leaped, and up the flight of stone steps he ran, but before he could ring the bell the door opened and there stood Everett Peterson.

"Why, Bob Angel!" he cried. "This is great! Did you come in for the game?"

"Well, Everett, do you live here?" Bob exclaimed in surprise. Bob was already doing some preparatory work at the North High, and it was there they had met. Then suddenly remembering the part he was supposed to be playing, Bob said solemnly, "Mr. Peterson, at present I am

Miss Doring's footman, and she sent me to inquire if your sister is in."

"So that's it," laughed Everett. "Yes, my sister is at home, and is expecting her guests."

The three girls now appeared on the porch, and Madge, hearing merry voices, came out of the library to greet them. She was indeed glad to meet Amanda, and that orphan girl, who had dreaded coming, for fear she would not be welcome, was soon put at her ease.

Everett and Bob had gone back to the car, and Everett was introduced to Adele's brother, Jack.

"I'll tell you what," Everett cried. "You fellows come back here for lunch and we'll all go to the game together."

Meanwhile Madge had led the girls into the library, which was richly though simply furnished. She asked them to be seated while they talked over which classes they would like to enter. "The Art Institute is just around the corner, and we are not

due there until ten-thirty," Madge said. "Of course, you lassies understand that it is an endowed institute, and so the classes are free. Eva has decided to take drawing. Adele, what would be your choice?"

"Oh, Miss Peterson!" Adele cried joyously. "I didn't know that I was to take anything. Have they a class for writers? I may not have any talent, but I'd so love to try."

Miss Peterson smiled at the girl's enthusiasm as she replied, "Then you shall have the opportunity, and really wanting to do a thing is half of success, I think, because one is more apt to persevere in spite of seeming failures." Then, turning to Amanda, she said kindly, "And what talent have you hidden away, little Miss Brown?"

Amanda flushed with evident embarrassment as she replied, "Oh, Miss Peterson, I don't suppose that I have any talents. If I have, I don't know what they are. I never had a chance to try anything."

Madge Peterson's heart was touched

with pity for this forlorn girl, and she said softly, "Amanda, won't you tell us a little about your life, before you went to the orphanage, and then perhaps we shall know how best to find your talent?"

"There isn't much to tell," Amanda said hesitatingly. "My mother was only eighteen when I came. She sang in concert-halls, and folks said her voice was like an angel's, sweet and sad-like. All that I seem to remember of her looks is that her face was so white and her dark eyes shone like stars. She used to leave me in a little back room when she sang, and then, when her part was over, she would catch me up in her arms and hold me close, and sometimes she cried. Then, when I was seven years old, she was taken sick. A kind old woman took care of us. One day my mother called me to her bedside. She said, 'Little daughter, if you can sing when you grow up, promise me that you won't sing in concert-halls.' Of course I promised. The old woman kept me for a while after

mother died, but she didn't have any money, and so she sent me to the orphanage and I've been there ever since, and now I am thirteen."

There were tears in the eyes of the listeners, and Madge said kindly, "Amanda, would you like to try to sing?"

Amanda shook her head. "You have to feel happy inside to want to sing," she said, "and I never feel that, at least I never did until Eva came," she added, with a loving glance toward her friend.

Then Madge rose and said, "Come, girls, we will go to the Art Institute now."

A few moments later they were entering a large building only a block from the Peterson home. Eva was placed in a drawing-class and Adele in one for composition. When the other two were alone, Madge said kindly, "Amanda, there is a dear old singing-master here. I have known him for years. Will you let him try your voice?"

"If you wish it," Amanda replied.

The kindly professor welcomed them and was soon testing the quality of the girl's voice. Later, he drew Madge aside and said: "The child has a sweet tone, though not strong. There is a sad note in her voice, strange for one so young. I will teach her gladly, and see what we can make of it."

And so it was that a new joy came into the life of Amanda Brown.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE BALL GAME

WHEN the classes were over, the girls met in the lower hall, and Eva was delighted to hear that Amanda had consented to have her voice tried. "And now you will come in with us every Saturday," she whispered to her friend, when, for a second, they were together in the merry throng of students who were leaving the building.

When they entered the Peterson home, a few moments later, they heard a great racket overhead.

"It sounds as though there were wild Indians in the house," Madge laughingly exclaimed. "Ho, there, Brother Everett! Are you making all that noise just by yourself?"

“Not much, sis,” a boy’s voice replied. “I have company. Be down directly.” And before the girls had time to lay off their wraps, down the stairs Everett leaped, followed by Bob Angel and Jack Doring.

“Sister mine,” Everett cried, “I do hope that you ordered grub enough, for three uninvited guests are coming to your party and we’re as hungry as Russian wolves in winter.”

Madge laughed and was about to reply, when Jack Doring exclaimed, “Miss Peterson, I do hope that we are not intruding. Bob and I had no intention of staying, but —”

Madge laughingly held up her hand as she replied, “My dear boy, if we had twenty unexpected guests, it would not inconvenience us in the least.”

“We’d just add twenty more cups of water to the soup,” Everett explained gayly, and then the Chinese gongs called them to the dining-room. The cook, who was an especial friend of Everett’s, had

been duly notified by that youth, and so the correct number of places had been laid.

The boys were so excited over the coming game that they could talk of nothing else. There were two high schools in the city, and the North High was to play against the South High. Everett attended the North High, and so, of course, his guests were on his side.

“We’ll win!” Everett cried. “How *could* we lose? We have the best pitcher this side of Jerusalem.”

“Everett!” Madge exclaimed. “Isn’t that a good deal of a boast? Jerusalem is a long way off. Wouldn’t you better say Sunnyside?”

“No, ma’am,” Everett retorted. “Eric Brownley is the best pitcher in the whole United States, or I miss my guess.”

“Why, that’s the boy we met at Little Bear Lake, isn’t it? The one who had been brought up by that nice old lumberman?” Adele asked.

“The very same!” Everett replied.

And then, as soon as lunch was over, the merry party put on their wraps, entered the two cars, and were soon driven to the campus of the North High, where the game was to be held.

Everett was so excited that he simply had to shout, but a great disappointment was awaiting him.

The North High campus was crowded with merry boys and girls. Those who were from the South High waved bright red pennants, and those from the North High had equally bright yellow ones. Every time one of the ball-players appeared, his particular class-mates gave their yell and cheered him until he disappeared again.

“The Souths are making a great to-do,” Everett said scornfully. “As though they had a ghost of a chance of winning! Not they, with our Eric Brownley on the diamond. Now, here come the players, and when you see Eric, *yell* like good ones.”

The girls stood on tiptoe and watched

for Eric as eagerly as did the boys. The players were taking their places, and yet Eric did not appear.

“Great guns!” Everett cried in dismay. “There’s Dorset, Eric’s sub! What’s he pitching for, I wonder? Say, you wait here till I find out.”

Everett, with a heavy heart, made his way through the crowd to the diamond. One of the players gave the information that he sought, and Everett returned to his friends, looking anything but cheerful.

“It’s all up,” he said dismally. “The game is as good as lost. I’ve a mind to go home.”

“Why, Everett,” Madge asked. “What has happened?”

“Oh, that old lumberman down at Bear Lake was hurt or something, and they sent for Eric two days ago, and he said that if he possibly could, he’d be back for the big game, but he didn’t make it. Imagine *anything* keeping a fellow from playing this game when he’s bound to be the victor.”

“I felt sure that Eric Brownley was a fine lad,” Madge declared warmly, “and now I know that he is.”

The game had commenced and the North High was decidedly getting the worst of it. They were not even playing their best; they were all disheartened because Eric had failed them.

The students from the South High were making the place ring with their cheers. Everett was disgusted.

“We’ve as good as lost. Come on! I’m going home,” he said, when suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd.

“What’s up?” Everett asked, trying to see over the heads.

“There’s a horseman coming at top speed down the road,” some one replied, “and it *might* be Eric Brownley.”

“It is Eric!” Everett cried excitedly, as he pushed through the crowd.

Eric had already leaped from his foaming horse and had entered the shack. As soon as possible he reappeared in his suit,

and what a cheer went up when Dorset dropped out and Eric took his place on the diamond. The rest of the nine took heart, and never before had they played such a splendid game as they did then.

When it was over the boys from the North High took Eric on their shoulders and bore him in triumph to the shack. Everett's joy knew no bounds, and he shouted until his hero had disappeared. Soon after, the three girls and Bob and Jack bade their host and hostess farewell and sped away over the smooth road which led to Sunnyside.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

ONE day in the week following, Gertrude Willis and Adele were seated on the front veranda of the Doring home, when the postman came up the walk.

“Does Miss Adele Doring live here?” he asked with twinkling eyes.

“Oh, Mr. Drakely!” Adele exclaimed, skipping down the walk to meet him. “Have you really a letter for me? Thank you so much! Letters are a rare treat,” she confided to Gertrude, “because all of my friends live in Sunnyside, and so there is no one to write to me except Uncle Jerry, but this letter hasn’t a foreign post-mark and so it isn’t from him. Why, it’s from Dorchester, and so, of course, Madge Peterson must have written it. She is that

charming artist that I have been telling you about, Gertrude. I am so eager to have you meet her."

Then Adele, reseating herself in the porch-swing, tore open the pale blue envelope, with its delicate odor of spring violets, and read aloud:

"DEAR DRYAD OAKLEAF:

"I just happened to remember that you once told me that you belong to a clan of seven girls. Are there any among them who have talents which they are eager to cultivate? If so, do bring them with you on Saturday mornings to attend the Institute. The more the merrier, and I shall be glad to have them take luncheon with me, as I shall always expect you and Eva and Amanda to do.

"Your loving friend,

"MADGE PETERSON."

"Oh, Gertrude!" Adele cried joyfully. "Could anything be nicer? I have so wished that you might go with me to take composition. I am just sure that you have talent for writing. Do you suppose that your mother could spare you?"

“If mother will permit me to do my share of the cleaning on Friday,” Gertrude said, “I would be glad to go, and, since it is vacation, I am sure that I can. I do want to study everything that will help me to become a writer. I enjoy that more than anything else, and I am eager to find some way to earn money, so that I may help educate the babies. There are so many of us, and a minister’s salary is not princely.”

“Then I will write Miss Peterson this very day and tell her that one of my dearest, bestest friends will gladly accept her invitation,” Adele exclaimed happily, as she gave Gertrude an impulsive hug.

Although Adele loved all of the Sunny Six, some way Gertrude was a little nearer and dearer, and she was beginning to think that, next to her, she loved Eva Dearman most among her friends.

Mrs. Willis was as pleased with the invitation as Adele and Gertrude had been, and the very next Saturday four girls instead of three went into the city of Dorchester.

This time they traveled by train, but the station being within a few blocks of the Institute, the country girls were in no danger of being lost.

Madge was charmed with gentle Gertrude and welcomed her graciously. "Girls," she said, as she drew on her gloves, "it is early, and since I have an errand in another part of town, I thought that perhaps you would like to accompany me."

"We would, indeed," Adele replied, and soon they were all in Everett's big car and that youth was slowly driving them through the crowded down-town district. The streets became narrower and noisier. The people were shabbily dressed, dirty children played in the gutters, loafers lounged on the corners. The air seemed hot and heavy with unpleasant odors. On both sides of the street were wretched tenement-houses.

"I have heard of this district," Gertrude said, "but I never before visited it. Oh,

Miss Peterson, doesn't it make one's heart ache to think that so very near are fields of daisies and buttercups, and yet these babies have to play in the gutters?"

Madge nodded, and then, as the car was stopping at the curb, she opened the door, and, taking a covered basket, led the way across the walk. Ragged little children stopped their play and watched them curiously with open eyes and mouths. Madge smiled down at them and then entered a dark, narrow hallway and began climbing the rickety stairs.

"I thought it was hard to have to live in the Home," Eva said softly to Adele, "but how thankful we ought to be that we do not have to live in a place like this."

Soon Madge was rapping on an upper door.

"Come in, Fairy Godmother!" an eager boy's voice called. Madge opened the door and they entered a room which was very different from the dark, shabby halls which they had just left. Here all was clean and

homelike. The windows were filled with blossoming plants, and a canary, hanging in the sunshine, was warbling his cheeriest song. Goldfish splashed and sparkled in their big shining bowl. A fluffy white kitten on the floor frisked about with a red ball for a playmate. A bright-eyed little hunchbacked boy sat on a softly-cushioned wheeled chair. He looked up with eager eyes.

“Good morning, Roberty-Bob,” Madge said. “I have brought some of my friends to call upon you. We cannot stay long, however, as we are on our way to the Art Institute, but I found the book that you wanted in the library this morning, and so I brought it right over.”

“Oh, good!” Roberty-Bob said with shining eyes. “The last one you brought was such a beautiful story, Fairy Godmother. It was all about the King’s Highway.” Then, turning to Gertrude, he asked in his eager, friendly way, “Do you know where the King’s Highway is?”

“I suppose it is where a king lives, and where princes and princesses play in beautiful gardens,” Gertrude replied, with her sweet smile.

“You are wrong!” the strange child exclaimed. “She is wrong, isn’t she, Fairy Godmother? God is the King, and His Highway is just wherever you are.”

Gertrude’s heart was touched by what she had seen and heard, and when they were in the street again she looked at the forlorn little children playing in the gutters and she said to Adele, “And so this is the King’s Highway, and oh, Della, I was being so thankful before we went up-stairs that we didn’t have to live here!”

Roberty-Bob was waving to them from his high window, and the girls waved in return.

“I guess I won’t grumble any more,” Amanda Brown declared. “Here I have a straight back and I can run if I want to, but it seems I’m always feeling fretful about something, and there’s that little

fellow, with his crooked back, keeping so bright and cheerful.”

“Does Roberty-Bob have to sit alone all day long?” Adele asked, as the car was slowly wending its way back to a pleasanter part of the city.

“Yes,” Madge replied. “His mother works in a factory, and she leaves early in the morning and does not return until late, but Roberty-Bob is never lonely. He can wheel his chair about the room and feed his goldfish and pussy, and water his plants, and sometimes Muffin, the kitten, rides around with him. Then he loves to read, and every Saturday afternoon the children who live in the rooms near by go in and sit on the floor, and he reads to them or tells them stories. I used to take him riding in the car, and how he enjoyed it! but the jarring made the pain in his back so much worse that we had to give that up.”

The Art Institute was soon reached and the girls went to their classes. Adele and Gertrude found that they were to write a

composition on whatever had most impressed them that morning. They were glad to do this, although neither had any expectation of winning the high marks, and so, on the following Saturday, they were indeed surprised when the teacher, Miss Fenton, said, "The best composition for last week was written by our newest pupil, Miss Gertrude Willis." And then, before that astonished girl could fully grasp this surprising announcement, the teacher was saying in her kindly way, "It is our custom to have the best composition read aloud each week, and so, Miss Willis, will you please come forward and read yours?"

Gertrude, self-possessed by nature, soon quieted the tumult in her heart, and, stepping to the platform, she took the composition which Miss Fenton handed to her, and then, in her clear, sweet voice, she read:

"THE KING'S HIGHWAY

"Once upon a time there was a great city, and in the lower part of it there were

narrow streets, with ragged children playing in the gutters, and loafers standing on the corners. If there ever had been hope in their hearts it had long since fled. And many of the mothers were shut in shops where they toiled all day and earned very little, that they might feed their children.

“The sun never seemed to shine in the lower part of that great city. The fog hung gray and dismal, and there was constantly the sharp clanging noise of traffic. The children in the gutter did not seem to mind, for they knew no different, but one day an artist was forced, through poverty, to move to this lower end of the city, and with him was his little daughter, Alicia. Her startled blue eyes looked about, and she clung to her father's hand as they wended their way down one of the narrow streets.

“‘Must we live here, father?’ she asked, and the artist sadly bowed his head.

“Alicia tried to make the barren room in the tenement look as home-like as possible, but she dreaded going to the corner store to buy even the few provisions that were needed.

“She shrank from touching the raggedly dressed children, who, attracted by her golden hair, would leave their play when she passed and whisper, ‘Pretty! Pretty!’

“But Alicia paid no heed. Her one thought was how sorry she was for herself.

If only she could live again in that lovely home which they had lost.

“All of her life she had lived in a beautiful garden, where high ivy-covered walls had sheltered her from the winds, where a fountain had sparkled for her, and where the birds had sung to her. But now,— The sensitive child looked about her and shuddered.

“One day her father brought her a book, and while she was alone she read the stories it contained, and one of them was called ‘The King’s Highway.’ Alicia fell to day-dreaming, as was her wont, and she thought how wonderful it would be, this King’s Highway. There would be castles on either side, and the pavement would be of gold. Gorgeous carriages, drawn by milk-white horses, would be passing up and down, and in them would be princesses and noble ladies, richly dressed, and they would have pages with plumed hats to attend them. As she thought of all this, and wished that she might be on the King’s Highway, she fell asleep and dreamed, and in her dream an angel came to her and said, ‘Alicia, the King is your Heavenly Father, and to-day you are living on the King’s Highway.’

“Alicia, awakening, sprang up, and, seeing that it was late, she went out to do her marketing. The fog had not lifted all day. The children on the curb seemed weary and tired of their play. Many of their faces

looked pinched, as though they did not have enough to eat. 'And so this is the King's Highway,' Alicia thought, 'and these are the King's children.' And then the angel that was always with Alicia whispered, 'And what are *you* doing on the King's Highway?'

" 'Nothing,' Alicia replied, 'only to be sorry for myself because I am there.'

" 'And then, to the surprise of the ragged children, the pretty Alicia went over and sat on the curb in their midst, and, putting her arms about those nearest, she said, 'Little ones, do you like stories?' 'What are stories?' one small boy asked, nestling close to her. 'I will tell you,' Alicia replied, and soon she was repeating a fairy-tale that they could all understand.

" 'From that day Alicia was very happy. She was never lonely because she was kept so busy making others happy on the King's Highway.'"

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

SCHOOL-DAYS AGAIN

THE long vacation was over, and on Monday morning the Sunny Seven met once more under the elm-tree in the school-yard.

“Oh, I’m so glad that school is going to begin again,” exclaimed the impulsive Betty Burd.

“Why, Betty?” Gertrude Willis laughingly inquired. “I didn’t know that you had such a thirst for knowledge.”

“Well, neither have I,” Betty confessed. “But somehow, during the vacation we all have so many things to do, we seven girls don’t see each other as often as we do in school-days. Why, just think! We haven’t been to our Secret Sanctum in ages, and we were so wild about it in the beginning.”

“I’ll tell you what!” exclaimed Adele. “Let’s go over there this afternoon and take our supper and have a good old-fashioned visit. This being the first day of school, we may not be kept in long.”

“Oh, let’s!” cried Doris Drexel, who, with her mother, had spent July and August at a seaside resort. “I’m just pining to see the meadows again. I’ve been away so long.”

“I suppose the cabin will be full of spiders,” said Rosie with a shudder.

“I’ll go ahead,” laughed Adele, “and ask them to please roll up their webs and move out into the meadows.”

Then, as the last bell was ringing, the girls trooped into the school. They were all eager to know who their new teacher would be, and all sad because they were losing Miss Donovan. They had heard that some changes had been made, and that the teacher who formerly had Seven B had been sent to another town.

“I just can’t wait to get to the room, to

see who our teacher is to be," Betty whispered, as the seven girls hurried up the stairs. The door of the seventh grade was standing open, and Betty was the first to enter. She gave a joyous cry as she danced in. The other girls, closely following, saw Betty throw her arms about the teacher, whose back was toward them.

"Why, it's Miss Donovan!" Adele cried in delight. "Oh, are you to be our teacher again this year? That would be too good to be true."

"Yes, I've been promoted with my girls," laughed the young teacher, "and I'm glad that you're glad."

It touched her heart to find how much the seven girls really loved her, and she planned to make this new year as happy and as profitable for them as she could.

"Now, girls," she said, "since I know that you can be trusted to keep the rules, you may choose seats wherever you wish."

"May we all sit in this window-corner together?" Doris asked. And when the

permission was given, they chose seats and stowed away their books.

“It will not be necessary for you girls to remain to-day,” Miss Donovan said. “I’ll give you your home-work and then you may go, but be back to-morrow morning at nine, ready for a term of hard study.”

“We will, indeed,” Adele assured her. “We are going to try to be perfect all through the year.”

“*We*, Adele?” Betty Burd inquired.

“Yes, *we*,” Adele replied. And Miss Donovan laughingly exclaimed, “That’s right, hitch your wagon to a star.”

That afternoon the girls met early at the cross-roads and wended their way over the meadows, which, in the bright September weather, were purple and yellow with golden-rod and wild aster. In the woods beyond were maple trees, flaunting in the sunlight their brightly colored leaves.

“I love the autumn days,” Adele said, as she danced along. “It doesn’t make me feel the least bit sad to see the leaves fall

and the flowers fade, because I know that they are all coming back in the spring. The plants and trees have to sleep, as we do, I suppose.”

Soon they reached the long-neglected Secret Sanctum. Peggy Pierce found the key and the door swung open.

“Oh, isn’t it pretty and homey!” Doris Drexel exclaimed. “It’s so long since I’ve been here, I had almost forgotten how very nice it is.”

Bertha threw open the little high-up window and a merry breeze danced in.

Rosamond, still on the threshold, called, “Will somebody please look for spiders?”

Betty Burd seized the broom, and, dancing around the room, poked it up in the ceiling-corners, for the cabin had a low and almost flat roof.

Peggy Pierce, just for mischief, looked under the bed-couch and Doris Drexel peered in the china-closet.

“Nary a spider here, fair Rosamond,” she called. “You may safely enter.”

“I know that you girls think I’m a dreadful scare-cat,” Rosamond declared. “But I just can’t help being afraid of things.”

“You’ll get over it,” Adele said kindly, “when you find that nothing hurts you. Now every one be seated and we will have the secretary read the minutes of the last meeting.”

Hats were tossed on the rustic couch, lunch-boxes stacked in a corner, and the seven girls sat tailor-wise on the floor.

“I deeply regret to have to inform you, Madam President,” Gertrude began with solemn dignity, “that your secretary forgot to bring the book, but she remembers that at the last meeting it was unanimously resolved that the Sunnyside Club should, singly and all together, do at least one kind deed a week. Has this resolve been carried out?”

“Dear me, no, I’m afraid not,” Adele said. “Fixing up the play-house for the orphan babies was the last kind deed on

the records, and the credit for that belongs to Betty Burd."

"Not at all!" Betty protested. "That was the whole club's kind deed."

"And how the kiddies are enjoying their play-house!" Gertrude declared. "I went over there last Sunday to read to them, and twenty happier babies it would be hard to find."

"Good!" Adele exclaimed. "Now the question before the house is, What kind deed shall the Sunnyside Club do next?"

"You tell us," Gertrude Willis said. "Adele, I just know that you have a suggestion to make."

"Well, then, I have," Adele confessed. "Last week, when I was over visiting with dear old Granny Dorset, I was telling her about one of our parties, and she said, rather wistfully, 'Parties are just for the young folks, aren't they, Della? And yet, I do believe that I would enjoy a party more now than I ever did, but I guess I've been to my last.' And then she sighed,

which was so unlike cheerful Granny Dorset, that I decided right then and there to give a party for her, and I want you all to help. Will you?"

"Will we?" Bertha Angel exclaimed. "Indeed we will! I think it is so sad when the grandmothers are kept away by themselves and are not invited to share in the good times. My dear old grandma told me that at eighty her heart felt as young as it ever had, and that she enjoyed having a pretty new dress as much as she did when she was sixteen."

"Oh, yes, and that's another thing," Adele said. "Granny Dorset told me that she would have a seventieth birthday one week from Saturday, and I asked, 'Granny, if you could have just what you wish for a birthday present, what would it be?' And, girls, you never could guess what she replied, not in a thousand years."

"Well, then, we might as well give up first as last," Peggy Pierce declared.

"Indeed you might," Adele laughed.

“I’m sure I never would have guessed it. Granny Dorset said that the dearest desire of her heart for the past ten years had been to possess a purple silk dress with lace in the neck and sleeves.”

“And she hasn’t been able to have it, of course,” Gertrude declared. “They belong to our church, and father calls there, and he said that the son-in-law is rather shiftless and the daughter has to scrimp in every way to provide for her own three children and Granny Dorset, but she is so proud that she won’t accept a bit of help.”

“Well,” Adele continued, “I thought that we would find out what other old people are still living in Sunnyside, who were young when Granny Dorset was, and then we’d invite them to a surprise birthday-party for her, and if we have money enough in the bank, we might buy her the purple silk dress.”

“Alas and alack!” Bertha exclaimed. “The bank is quite empty. Nothing has

been put into it since we bought the presents for the orphans.”

“I’ll tell you what!” Peggy Pierce exclaimed. “Let’s start an account at the Bee Hive. Dad will be glad to do it for us, and we can buy the purple silk at cost. Miss Meadly, who does our sewing, will make the dress for us and wait for her pay until we have the money.”

“And as for the lace,” Rosamond Wright exclaimed, “my mother has ever and ever so much of it, and I know she will gladly donate enough for the neck and sleeves.”

“I hate to go in debt,” Adele said thoughtfully, “but we surely will find a way to earn money soon, and I do so want Granny Dorset to have the purple silk dress on her birthday.”

“We might do it just this once,” said the practical Bertha, “and then as soon as the party is over we must scurry around and find some way to earn money. We simply must not stay in debt.”

“We might give a play or something,” Betty Burd suggested.

“Now,” said President Adele, “who would like to be on a committee to find out from Granny Dorset which of the old people who are to-day living in Sunnyside were young when she was?”

“I suggest that Adele Doring and Gertrude Willis be appointed on that committee,” Rosamond drawled.

“Very well, we will accept, won’t we, Gertrude?” Adele asked brightly. And when Gertrude had agreed, the president added, “And I would like to nominate Peggy Pierce and Rosamond Wright as a committee of two to see that the purple silk dress is made, and that there is lace in the neck and sleeves.”

“But you will all have to help pick out the color and the pattern,” Peggy protested, and to this the others agreed.

“I am glad that we have two weeks to prepare,” Adele said, “because, now that school has begun, we will not want to neg-

lect our studies, and it will take two weeks to have the dress made and —”

“But Adele,” Bertha exclaimed, “we haven’t decided where to hold the party.”

“We might have it here,” Adele said thoughtfully. “But don’t let’s decide that yet. And now let’s go for a tramp to the orphanage and invite Eva and Amanda to come over here and share our picnic supper.”

This was done, and the orphans were so happy and so grateful that the seven could not but feel that their Sunnyside Club was fulfilling its mission by bringing so much joy into the lonely lives of these two girls.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE HOUSE BY THE WOOD

THE following afternoon Adele Doring and Gertrude Willis, hand in hand, skipped along Cherry Lane on their way to Granny Dorset's. The leaves on the trees were yellow, and fluttered down on them as they passed. Dear Granny Dorset, who had not walked for many a year, was sitting on the sunny front porch in her pillowed chair. She looked up brightly as the girls opened the gate, calling gayly, "Here come my little Sunshine Maidens. What good news have you to-day?"

Granny Dorset's own middle-aged daughter was so busy with housekeeping and making ends meet that she seldom knew what happened in the village of Sunnyside, and so these girls often hunted up

bits of happy gossip to take to the little old lady.

Sitting on the edge of the porch, Gertrude replied, "Oh, Granny Dorset, did you know that Jane Dally has the darlingest new baby? It was christened last Sunday, and when father held it in his arms, it smiled up at him, and it has the sweetest dimple. Old Grandfather Dally stood up with it, and how his face did shine with pride and happiness! "

" 'Lijah Dally a grandad again! " the old lady said brightly. "Well, to think of that now. He and I were children together. Della, his dad was one of your grandpa's sheep-herders, and when he was a little fellow he lived in that cabin over in the meadows."

"Oh, Granny, did he really?" Adele asked eagerly.

This indeed was the object of the girls' visit, to find out what other old people, now living in the village, had been young when Granny Dorset was a girl, so that they

might invite them to Granny's surprise-party.

Then Gertrude asked a direct question: "Is there any one else living around here who was young when you were?"

"Not so many now," the old lady replied thoughtfully. "Some have moved away and some have gone to the better country, but there's old Mr. and Mrs. Quigley, — they as had to go to the poorhouse when their cabin burned down. They had lived in it for nigh forty year, and they always did for others when they had it, but when they needed help themselves, folks let them go on the county."

"Oh, how sad!" Adele exclaimed. "Why couldn't some one have given them a cabin to live in for the few years that are left?"

"Well, nobody did," Granny replied. "And then there's Sally Grackle. She lives all by herself, out on the edge of the woods. It's strange how people change! Sally was such a jolly girl and everybody

liked her, but she had a sorrow, which, like as not, made her queer-actin', the way she is now. She's shut herself up, and I've heard tell that she won't see anybody. That's all the folks living around here now who were young when I was."

Half an hour later, when the two girls were slowly wending their way homeward, Gertrude said, "Not a very promising party, Della, judging by the guests. Poor Miss Grackle, not quite in her right mind, and Mr. and Mrs. Quigley out at the poor-house. Luckily Grandpa Dally is a host in himself. He's jolly and brimful of stories, so perhaps our party will be a success if we can get the guests to agree to come to it."

The next morning the Sunny Seven met under the elm-tree in the school-yard to report progress. When the other five had heard of the visit to Granny Dorset, Betty Burd exclaimed, "That terrible Miss Grackle! You needn't appoint me on a committee to go and invite her. I know

some church ladies who went there once and she chased them away with a broom.”

“Poor thing!” Adele said. “She must be very unhappy, living there all alone by that desolate wood. Gertrude and I will gladly go and invite Miss Grackle to the party.”

That very afternoon they started out toward the woods at the north edge of the village. The houses were scattered, and at last the girls turned into a path which led through a swampy meadow. They had to pick their way carefully, to keep from getting their feet wet. Their destination was a weather-beaten, gray house, which looked as though it was about to tumble down, standing in the deep shade of two large pines. It was a cloudy day and the wind moaned dismally through the trees. There was no sign of life about the place. The seldom-used gate creaked as it swung open on rusty hinges.

“I suppose that at any minute Miss Grackle may rush out at us with a broom,”

Gertrude whispered. "Do you feel at all afraid, Adele?"

"No," the other girl replied, as they steadily advanced toward the house. The porch, which was broken in places, was littered with leaves.

"Miss Grackle doesn't use her broom to sweep with, I judge," Gertrude said softly.

Adele rapped bravely, but no one answered. Then she turned the knob and the door opened. The room which they entered was dark, cheerless, and damp. At first, they could scarcely see, and so they stood still. When they had become accustomed to the dim light, the girls saw a large, old-fashioned bed, and in it lay an elderly woman with a pinched, gray face.

"Oh, Miss Grackle!" Adele said, hurrying to the bedside. "You are ill and all alone here!"

"Well, what if I am?" the old woman replied tartly. "It's nobody's business and nobody cares."

"If we made a fire in the stove, it would

take the chill from the room," Gertrude suggested kindly.

"Maybe so, like as not," the old woman agreed. "But where's the wood?"

"I'll bring some in," Gertrude replied. "I saw some fallen branches near by."

So saying, Gertrude went out and quickly returned with an armful of dry wood, and soon a fire snapped and crackled cheerfully in the stove.

"And now I'll make you some broth," said Adele.

"You'll be smart if you do," Miss Grackle replied. "What are you planning to make it out of?"

"Why, Miss Grackle!" Adele exclaimed when she found the cupboards bare. "Haven't you had anything to eat?"

"Not a sumptuous banquet," the old woman replied in a non-committal manner.

Now Adele's father had said only that very morning that Miss Grackle had plenty of money, so Adele decided that she had just been too ill to order things.

“I’ll be back in a minute,” the girl said aloud, and away she went, leaving the wondering Gertrude to care for the invalid.

A woman who often came to the Doring home to help Kate with the cleaning lived in the house nearest, on the main road, and from her Adele procured some lamb broth and bread. Miss Grackle, truly faint from hunger, could not resist the fragrance of the broth which Adele was heating, and she rather ungraciously permitted Gertrude to prop her up with the pillows, while Adele brought to her a bowl of the steaming broth and some fresh bread and butter.

When this was eaten Miss Grackle seemed stronger. She looked at the girls curiously.

“Young ladies,” she said, “perhaps you do not know it, but you are the first two human beings who have succeeded in crossing my threshold in ten years. Now, pray tell me, what did you come for? You must have a reason.”

“We came to invite you to a surprise

birthday-party which we are going to give for Granny Dorset," Adele said simply.

The girls, watching the old lady, were surprised to see a twinkle appear in the gray eyes.

"Well," she declared, "I had decided to die, but now I do believe that I will live a while longer; and, thank you kindly, I'll come to the party."

Before they left, Miss Grackle gave the girls some money and asked them to order some groceries for her at the store.

"And be sure to tell that boy to leave the things just inside the gate the way he always does."

The next morning, under the elm-tree, the five other girls listened with ever-widening eyes, as Adele and Gertrude told of their visit to Miss Grackle.

"Well, you surely are the two bravest girls I ever met," Rosamond Wright declared, and the others fully agreed with her.

"The visit we are going to make this

afternoon," Gertrude replied, "will be harder still. I almost dread calling on those two old people, who are so unhappy because they have to live in the poor-house."

But a pleasant surprise awaited the girls.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

A VISIT TO THE POORHOUSE

THAT afternoon Adele and Gertrude drove to the poorhouse, which was two miles out on the east road. Leaving Firefly hitched at the gate, they walked up the gravel path, on either side of which was a narrow garden, bright with autumn flowers. Tall maples stood about on the lawn, and their leaves were red and yellow. The afternoon sun was warm, and many old ladies, wrapped in shawls, were seated here and there on rustic benches.

“Everything seems cheerful,” Adele said. “I wonder where we shall find Mrs. Quigley.”

They made inquiry of a woman who was coming down the walk.

“I’m Mrs. Quigley!” was the cheerful

reply, and the old lady led them to a bench near by. "I don't know you, do I?" she asked kindly.

The girls were indeed relieved, for they had both feared that they were to meet a grief-stricken old lady. They were not old enough to know that many a bright face hides an aching heart, and the wrinkled face smiling up at them surely tried to be bright.

When Adele told their errand, Mrs. Quigley exclaimed, "Well, now, won't Pa Quigley be pleased! It's a long time since we were asked to a party." Then, turning to Adele, she took her hands and said: "And so you're Daniel Doring's granddaughter. Daniel was mighty good to my man and me, and he'd be sorry if he knew that we had lost our little home. But there—" she smiled quickly through her tears. "I tell Pa Quigley, when he's wishing we had our little home once more, where we could sit by the fireplace evenings, like we used to love to do, — I tell him that we

must count our blessin's. Things might be worse. One of us *might* be dead, and then how lonely the other of us would be!"

"That's true," Adele said as she arose, and then, stooping, she impulsively kissed the wrinkled cheeks as she added, "Mrs. Quigley, you belong to our Sunnyside Club, don't you?"

"Maybe so," said the little old lady, rising. "Once I read somewhere, 'Every cloud has a silver lining; let's wear our clouds with the linings on the outside.' I try to do that. It makes it pleasanter for other folks, and I don't know but it's cheerier even for the person who is wearing the cloud."

"I'm going to remember that," Gertrude said as she pressed the wrinkled hand which she held. Then Adele exclaimed, "Now, Mrs. Quigley, a week from Saturday we'll call for you at two, so you be ready and watching."

When the girls were driving down the country road, Adele exclaimed earnestly,

“Gertrude, those Quigleys are going to have a home together if it lies within my power to get it.”

“Isn’t it queer, Adele,” the other remarked reflectively, “how different people are. There are some women who have everything that money can buy, and yet they are discontented and fretful. If they could have heard dear old Mrs. Quigley just now, it might have done them more good than a whole book full of sermons.”

They were driving along a pleasant street in the village, and Adele soon drew rein in front of a neat white cottage with green blinds. “There is Grandfather Dally under the apple-tree,” she remarked as she hitched Firefly to a post.

“Well! Well!” the old man exclaimed, as he peered over his spectacles at the two girls. “If it ain’t Tudy and Dellie! ’Taint often I have a call from two nice little girls, but there, more’n likely you’ve come to call on my daughter, but she’s out somewheres, a-wheelin’ the baby.”

The girls assured him that they had called on purpose to see him, as they wished to invite him to a party. The old man was as pleased as a boy when he heard this. Then he added with a chuckle, "I've heerd that you little girls have turned the cabin out in the meadows into a sort of a play-house. Ain't you skeered that the miser'll come back some time and ketch you there?"

"Miser!" Adele and Gertrude exclaimed in one breath. "What miser, Grandpa Dally? We never heard of one!"

"Hum, now, you don't say! I thought like as not everybody had heerd tell of him. It was after the sheep-raisin' business had been given up in these parts, and there wa'n't no one a-livin' in the cabin at that time. Your grandpa, Della, had locked it up and kept the key. Well, one day a long, lank man from nobody knew where appeared in these parts, and asked ole Daniel Doring if he might rent that cabin for a spell. Your grandad was for givin' the under fellow a chance, and this stranger

said he was here to recuperate his health or some such, and so he got the key and was told he could live there as long as he chose and welcome.

“The man stayed pretty close to the cabin, and the folks in town was puzzled about him, and so one night two of the boys went out there and they clum up the side of the cabin somehow, and peeked in at that little high window, and Josh Perkins said afterwards that he almost fell down agin, when he saw what was a-goin’ on inside of that cabin. There sat the long, lank man at the table, and in the candle-light he was a-countin’ out gold pieces. Josh said he had a bag full of them. People were suspicious, of course, when they heerd that, and the very next day the sheriff went out to the cabin, and what do you think? The place was empty. Like as not the miser had heerd the boys prowlin’ about in the night, and he left for parts unknown and took his gold with him, I suppose, though nobody knows as to that, for your

grandad, Della, locked the cabin right up then and kept the key."

Half an hour later the girls were again driving down the road. "What a strange, uncanny story that was about the miser!" Gertrude said with a shudder.

"Rosamond has always said that the furniture in the cabin would probably tell queer stories if it could talk," Adele remarked. And then she added suddenly, "Oh, Gertrude! Don't you wish that we could find that gold, and then we could take care of the Quigleys!"

Gertrude laughed. "If he was a miser, he certainly took his gold with him." Then she asked, "Della, did you ever hear what Miss Grackle's great sorrow was, the one that made her turn against every one and live all alone by herself in that dismal house by the woods?"

"Yes," Adele replied. "Father was telling mother about it last night. He said that when he was a boy, Miss Grackle and a younger sister lived in that big, rambling

house on the Dickerson Road, the one that has been boarded up for so many years. The sister's name was Miranda, and she was about ten years younger than Sally, and very pretty, but father said she was nowhere near as capable. They lived together very happily after their father died. Sally did all of the housework and waited on Miranda hand and foot, as the saying goes, and the younger one, who was rather selfish, accepted it as her due. They owned the house and land together, but they each had plenty of money besides. Then one day a stranger appeared in town, and, having heard that the pretty Miranda Grackle had a fortune in her own right, he began to court her. Miss Sally quickly saw that he was a mere adventurer, trying to marry some one with money, and she begged Miranda to give him up, but she wouldn't, and then one night they ran away and were secretly married. Miss Sally was heartbroken. She heard that they had gone to Arizona, where the man had mines.

She followed them there, but never found them. She came back a broken-hearted woman, boarded up the old homestead where she had been so happy, and then went to live all alone in that house out by the woods."

"Poor Miss Grackle!" Gertrude said. "Here we are by the Dickerson Road, Adele. Would it be much out of our way to drive past the boarded-up house? I never happened to notice it."

"No," Adele replied, as she turned the pony's head in that direction. "The house is just beyond that clump of trees."

When the little grove was passed, the girls gave an exclamation of surprise. "Why, it isn't boarded up at all," Gertrude said. "See, even the windows are open."

"And if there isn't Miss Grackle herself," Adele cried, as a tall, elderly woman appeared in the doorway to shake a dust-cloth. She had on a big apron, with a towel about her head.

Adele drew rein and fairly flew up the walk, Gertrude following her.

“Oh, Miss Grackle!” Adele cried. “I’m so glad to see that you are well again. And have you really and truly moved over here?”

Somehow Miss Grackle did not seem to be old, like Granny Dorset, and, for that matter, she was several years the younger.

Upon hearing her name called, the woman turned and welcomed the girls gladly. “Yes,” she said, and there was almost a quiver in her voice. “For years it has seemed as though I just couldn’t come back here without sister Miranda, and when she never even wrote to me, I turned bitter against everybody, but when you little girls came the other day and showed me that there was love and kindness in the world, I decided to live a while longer and see if I couldn’t do a bit of good. I’m going to try to really live now. I’ve been buried long enough.”

“Oh, Miss Grackle,” Adele cried, “I’m

so glad! So glad! And what a nice place this is! You had beautiful grounds once, didn't you?"

The lady nodded. "Father was proud of his lawns and gardens," she said. "You see that little cottage on the edge of the grove. Father's gardener lived there, and his wife helped mother in the kitchen, for there were three children of us then, — I had a brother who died, — and there was work enough to do."

"It's a pretty little cottage," Adele said. "Has it been empty all these years?"

"Yes," Miss Grackle replied. "I would like to have a couple living in it now, if the man would attend to my grounds in exchange for the rent."

With a cry of joy Adele threw her arms about the astonished woman as she exclaimed, "Would you really, truly, Miss Grackle? Oh, Gertrude, wouldn't it be just the nicest place for the Quigleys?"

"Why, what has happened to the Quigleys?" Miss Grackle asked in surprise. "I

thought that they had a small farm of their own. Did they lose it? You see, I haven't heard a bit of news in years."

Then Adele told the whole story, and Miss Grackle indignantly exclaimed: "That shows the ingratitude of people! There never was a sick child in the country round but that Mrs. Quigley was there to help the tired mother care for it, and never a tramp passed her door but that she made him a cup of tea and gave him a bite to eat, and talked to him all the time in that bright, cheerful way of hers; and some of them, I know, took to honest work after that, and they said that it was just because of her. And the town let the Quigleys go to the poorhouse! Well, they'll not stay there! At least they can live in the cottage, and perhaps in the spring Mr. Quigley could work the garden on shares." Then she added simply, "My income is not as large as it was, Adele, and my sister Miranda may come home at any time and be in need, so I must be saving for her sake. But there,"

she added more brightly, "the Quigleys shall move into the cottage at once, and a way to provide for them will surely open up."

Soon after that two happy girls drove away. "Isn't it just like magic, the way things are happening!" Adele exclaimed, and Gertrude agreed. The girls were to have a strange adventure the next day, as you shall hear.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

A MYSTERY SOLVED

AFTER school on Friday the Sunny Seven danced over the Buttercup Meadows on their way to the cabin.

“We ought to call it Golden-rod Meadows now,” Betty Burd declared.

“I love the purple asters tangled in with the gold!” Gertrude Willis exclaimed.

“Dame Nature is a wonderful artist.”

“And the maple wood is so bright and red,” Doris Drexel said. “We might have Granny Dorset’s party here. Surely, no ball-room could be more splendid.”

As they were talking they approached the cabin, and Peggy Pierce, finding the key, opened the door.

“Girls!” Rosamond exclaimed, as she

peered in. "I almost wish that Grandpa Dally had not told us about that miser. It makes me feel shuddery to think of him. Long and lank, he sat right there at our table as he counted out his gold pieces by the light of a candle."

"Well, he isn't here now," said practical Bertha, as she entered the cabin and threw open the window.

"Of course he isn't," Adele exclaimed. "There's no one in our Secret Sanctum but just ourselves."

The girls, finding it hard to overcome an uncanny feeling, nevertheless entered the cabin and began to make definite plans for the party which they were going to give for Granny Dorset, when suddenly there was a strange clinking noise in the wall.

Rosamond sprang to her feet, her eyes wide and startled. "What was that?" she asked. The other girls stood up and listened. They distinctly heard a scurrying and then another clinking sound.

"It must be a chipmunk or a ground-

squirrel,” Adele said, trying to speak calmly.

“I would think so myself,” Bertha replied, “but for the other noise, — the clinking. How could a squirrel make that?”

The girls examined the wall, and Gertrude exclaimed, “Why, this seems to be a boarded-up fire-place.”

“Yes, and here is a loose board,” Bertha said, “so now the mystery will be explained.”

The bark-covered boards were easily pried away and a stone-lined fire-place was disclosed. There were wood-ashes on the floor of it, but no squirrel, and nothing that would clink.

“Look!” Gertrude said. “Here is a hole through which a squirrel might have gone.”

Adele peered up the blackened chimney. There was a rude stone ledge just above her head, and suddenly, with a frightened chirr, a chipmunk jumped from the ledge to the floor and darted into the meadow

through the hole which Gertrude had seen.

The creature's quick movement had dislodged something on the shelf and it fell clinking against a stone.

With a cry of amazement Adele stooped and picked up a gold piece.

"Quick, bring a stool, somebody!" she called. "I'll climb up and see what is on that ledge."

"The miser's gold!" she declared, as she handed Bertha a bag. The chipmunk, hoping to find nuts, had gnawed a hole in it. The girls gathered around were scarcely able to believe their eyes. "Here's a piece of brown paper," Adele said, "and there's writing on it!"

The writing in places was very hard to read, but at last they made it out, and Adele read aloud:

"To whoever finds this money, I wish to say that it wasn't come by honest. It hasn't brought me any happiness and I don't want it. I'd give it back to the folks who own it, if I knew who they was, but I don't. I'm going back to the town where I was a boy and I'm going to live straight."



"The miser's gold!"—Page 290.

“I’m so disappointed,” Adele announced. “I thought of the Quigleys at once, and how it would help them, but they would not want stolen money.”

“I’ll tell you what,” said Gertrude Willis. “Let’s take it to father with the note and ask his advice. Perhaps it would help to right the wrong if the money were used for some good purpose.”

Half an hour later the girls arrived at the neat parsonage. They found the minister working in his garden, and he listened gravely to the story of the miser and his bag of gold.

As Gertrude had anticipated, her father said, “Since the money cannot be returned to its rightful owners, it surely ought to be used in doing good. If I were you, I would deposit it in the bank and draw upon it as a need arises.”

Thanking Mr. Willis for his advice, seven happy girls went to the bank of which Doris Drexel’s father was president.

Luckily Mr. Drexel was still there, and

he had the bag emptied and the money counted. "One thousand dollars," he reported with a smile, "and I believe, little lassies, that Mr. Willis has made a wise suggestion."

When the girls left the place a while later, Bertha carried a little book which stated that she was the treasurer of the Sunnyside Club, which had funds to the amount of one thousand dollars in the First National Bank in the town of Sunnyside.

Next, the seven girls visited Miss Grackle, to tell her the story. "We wish this money to be used by the Quigleys," Adele said, "but since we do not want them to feel that they are receiving charity, we wish that you, Miss Grackle, would give them a certain amount of it each month for taking care of your garden and grounds."

"That will be a splendid plan," Miss Grackle said brightly. "And now, before you go, would you girls like to see the cot-

tage in which the Quigleys are to live? I have aired it out and made it fresh and tidy.”

“We’d love to see it!” Adele exclaimed, and so Miss Grackle led the way to the little cottage beside the maple grove.

The three rooms were sunny and bright, and the big, old-fashioned stove in the kitchen had been freshly blackened. The wood-box was filled, for, as Miss Grackle explained, she wanted it to look home-like as soon as they saw it. In the living-room there were two easy-chairs with bright patch-work cushions, and in the bedroom beyond all was spotlessly clean and inviting.

“I can hardly wait until to-morrow,” Betty Burd exclaimed.

“Nor I,” Gertrude Willis declared. “The party was planned to be a surprise for Granny Dorset, but think of the joyous surprise which is in store for those poor Quigleys. They will expect to return to the poorhouse after the party, and when

they find that they are to have a home, oh, Adele, won't they be the happiest old people in all the world!"

"Girls!" Adele cried suddenly. "We did plan on having the party out in our meadow cabin, but wouldn't it be much nicer to have it right here? That is, of course, if you are willing, Miss Grackle."

"That is really a first-rate idea!" Miss Grackle declared. "And then, instead of having a cold chicken supper, we can have a warm one."

Adele's mother, when she heard of the change, agreed that it was a splendid plan. Kate offered to cook the chickens and things in her own kitchen, and then, at the last moment, they were to be taken to the cottage and kept warm until served.

When Saturday morning dawned, Adele, at an early hour, drove over to the orphanage and readily obtained permission for Eva and Amanda to spend the day with her. On their way back they gathered armfuls of bright red leaves from the

sumac bushes, and graceful stalks of golden-rod and purple aster. These they took to the cottage where the Quigleys were to live, and Adele filled bowls and pitchers and set them about everywhere.

Soon thereafter the other six girls arrived, and then what a hustling and bustling there was! The living-room table was covered with a snowy-white cloth, and on it was laid Miss Grackle's choice old-fashioned blue-and-white china and the newly polished silver, and in the very center was a blue bowl of golden-glow.

"Now," Adele said as she stood back and surveyed the scene, "everything is ready for the surprise-party and we may rest a while from our labors. At two o'clock Bob Angel and Gertrude Willis are to go to the poorhouse to get the Quigleys, and at two-thirty Brother Jack and Eva may go after Granny Dorset. I think it would be nice to have all of the guests here before she arrives."

"Here comes an automobile up the drive

now!” Betty Burd exclaimed. “Who do you suppose is in it?”

“Oh, it’s brother Bob in our car,” Bertha declared.

The girls skipped out to the driveway, and Bob, leaping to the ground, made a deep bow as he said, “Ladies, this is a free bus which will gladly convey you to your several homes, if you care to entrust your lives to my keeping.”

“Oh, good enough!” Peggy Pierce exclaimed. “I was just wishing that I was home to help mother get the dinner, and now I will be there in a twinkling.”

“We have our fiery steed,” Adele said, “so Eva and Amanda and I will travel in my little red cart, but thank you, just the same.”

Then, waving good-bye to smiling Miss Grackle, the girls and Bob started down the Dickerson Road on their homeward way.

Meanwhile, in the poorhouse, Mrs. Quigley was hunting in her shabby hair-trunk

for a bit of old-time finery. Little, indeed, did she dream of the great joy which was so soon to be hers.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

A REALLY, TRULY HOME

PROMPTLY at two o'clock Bob Angel and Gertrude Willis arrived at the poorhouse, and on a bench near the gate sat the old couple. How their faces shone when they saw the automobile which was to bear them to the party!

The old lady in bonnet and shawl, and the old man in a well-brushed, though threadbare, coat, and hat, frayed at the edges, arose as Gertrude went forward to greet them. She said afterwards that it was hard for her to keep from throwing her arms about the dear old lady and telling her then and there of the great happiness that was in store for them, but, instead, she kissed the bright, wrinkled face and shook hands with Mr. Quigley, whom

she had never met before. Bob had leaped to the ground, and after Gertrude had introduced him to their guests, he carefully helped the old lady to the comfortable back seat and the old man to the front.

Mr. Quigley's eyes were shining like a boy's as Bob drove rather slowly down the country road. "Land sakes alive, ma!" he called. "Ain't this great! Make her go faster, boy. We ain't a mite afeared." So Bob put on a bit more speed, and soon they reached the Grackle homestead.

"Well, I swan!" the old man cried when he shook hands with Miss Grackle. "Wonders never will cease, I reckon. If here ain't Sally Grackle herself, lookin' younger'n she did when I saw her last."

Miss Grackle beamed happily as she greeted the Quigleys and led them into the cottage. A moment later Grandpa Dally, as he insisted that every one should call him, arrived in a long-tailed coat which he had first worn at his wedding many years before.

“Well, Della!” he exclaimed when that maiden met him at the door. “So the party day arrived all right. Bless me, but you do look cozy in here! Howdy, Dan Quigley! Mighty glad to see you lookin’ so pert! Hum, ha!” he added, with twinkling eyes, as the two old ladies appeared from the bed-room. “And if these girls aren’t Sally Grackle and Betsy Quigley. You don’t look a minute older’n you did in them days when we used to have parties pretty frequent.”

Suddenly Adele darted into the living-room from the kitchen. “Everybody hide!” she whispered. “Here comes Granny Dorset, and when she gets well settled I will say ‘Ahem,’ and then you are all to spring out and call ‘Happy Birthday!’ ”

What a scurrying there was! Grandpa Dally hid behind the open door, Mr. Quigley squeezed himself into a closet, and Mrs. Quigley and Miss Grackle went into the bed-room.

Bob and Jack helped Granny Dorset into

the pleasant living-room, and she looked about her in speechless amazement as she sank into the comfortable rocker in a sunny window. "Well, Della," she exclaimed, "whatever is the meaning of all this?"

"Ahem," said the laughing girl, and out from their hiding-places sprang the four old people, each calling gayly, "Happy birthday, Sarie Dorset!"

The eight girls, watching from the kitchen-door, were certainly satisfied with the way in which Granny Dorset was surprised.

"Oh! Oh!" she said, with tears of joy running down her wrinkled cheeks. "It's a party, isn't it? I never thought I'd live to go to another one."

Then, when her bonnet and shawl had been removed, Adele reappeared from the bedroom, carrying a long box.

"It's a birthday present for you, Granny Dorset," the girl announced. "And if you can guess what's in it, you may have it."

With shining eyes the old lady guessed

one thing and then another, and then at last hesitatingly said, "It couldn't be a dress, could it, Della?"

"You've guessed it!" Adele cried gayly. "And now open it up and see what you will see!"

Granny Dorset gave a little cry of joy when she beheld the purple silk dress. "It's just what I've always wanted," she said; "and there's lace in the neck and sleeves." Then she added, "Della, being as it's my birthday, I wish I could put it on."

"And so you shall," Adele declared. Then she and Eva assisted the little old lady into the bedroom, whence a little later she emerged, dressed in the purple gown, and the happiness glowing in that dear old face made the girls glad indeed that Adele had thought of that particular birthday present.

Then, when the old people were comfortably seated in the easy-chairs, some having been brought from the big house,

and the girls, tailor-wise, on the floor, Granny Dorset said, “ ‘Lijah Dally, being as the girls have turned that sheep-herder’s cabin into a playhouse, why don’t you tell them something that happened round there when you was a boy?’ ”

Grandpa Dally looked pleased to be called upon to entertain the company. “I would, Sarie,” he replied, “but just this minute I don’t seem to think of nothing.”

“Suppose you tell ‘em how you met the wolves,” Mr. Quigley suggested.

“Oh, Grandpa Dally,” Rosamond cried with a shudder. “Did you really meet some wolves once, and didn’t they eat you?”

Every one laughed at Rosie’s question. “If they had,” Grandpa Dally replied, “I wouldn’t be here to tell you the story. Well,” he began, “when I was about eight years old, my father and me lived in that sheep-herder’s cabin out in the meadows. I hadn’t a mother and I sort of grew up any way. There was wolves here-

abouts in them days, and when they got real hungry, especially in winter, they came prowling around and howling at night. Often father and the other herder who lived with us would go out with their guns and drive them away from the fold.

“When I was twelve year old, my father gave me a gun and taught me how to shoot it, and after that I felt very brave and bold.

“That winter was bitterly cold, and the snow was deep, but it was crusted over so that we could walk on it. The sheep were all in the fold, and at night we often heard the wolves howling in the hills.

“ ‘ ‘Lijah,’ my father said to me, ‘when ever you go to the store at the crossings be sure that you carry your gun.’

“Once a week I went to the store, which was two miles away, to get supplies and the mail. I wore a fur cap and mittens, and I did not mind the cold much. With my gun over my shoulder and my snow-shoes on my feet I started out one day. I only passed one house on the way, and in it

lived a wood-cutter and his wife and two children. As I was a-passin' by, the woman called and asked me if I'd do an errand for her at the store. She said her man was up to the woods, but she was expectin' him back about nightfall. I said I'd do her errand and glad to oblige, and then I went on my way.

“At the store there was some trappers just come in from the hills, and they said wolves was thick up that ways, and extra hungry on account of the deep snow. ‘Hello, sonny,’ one of them called after me, when, with my packages strapped to my back, I started to leave the store. ‘You ain’t goin’ home all alone, be you? Don’t see what yer pa’s thinkin’ of to let ye, with wolves around as thick as they be.’

“I told him I wasn’t a bit afeared, and I hurried out. The first half-mile I skated over the hard, crusted snow without a trip, but then a strap bust on one of my snowshoes and I had to stop quite a while to fix it before I could go on. When I got it

mended it was growing dark, and I was almost afeared to go on, thinking of what the trapper had said, but I knew dad would be out huntin' for me if I didn't turn up, so I skated off at a stiff pace. I tried to whistle, to sort of cheer me up, but somehow I couldn't, for fear that the wolves would hear.

“I was nearing the woods, when I suddenly saw something which made my blood run cold. There was wolf-tracks all around in the snow, and they was fresh. I stood still, not a-darin' to go on. I knew I was near the woman's house, but I couldn't see it for the trees. Just as I was wonderin' what to do, I heerd a frightened cry for help. It was that woman, I felt sure, and with all speed I rounded the edge of the wood. The cabin door stood open and I saw two wolves a-goin' in. Without thinkin' what I was to do, I darted to the door and fired. One wolf fell at my feet with an ugly snarl, but the other turned and leaped at me. I struck it with my gun,

but I felt its sharp teeth cuttin' into my arm. Just as I thought it was all over with me, a shot rang out from behind, and that wolf dropped dead, hit in the heart.

“It was the wood-cutter. He had been a-returnin’, but when he heard my gun he came on a run. Then, for the first time, I saw the woman and two small children crouched in a corner. The woman came forward, white from fright, and she took my hand as she said in a tremblin’ voice, ‘Lijah Dally, if I live to be a thousand, I can’t do enough to thank you for savin’ my babies. The wolves was just about to leap on them when you came in and fired, and the critters turned on you instead. A minute more and nothin’ could ‘a’ saved them.’

“‘You are a brave boy,’ the woodsman said, but I didn’t feel brave at all. I was shakin’ so I ’most couldn’t stand. Just then there came a rap on the door. It was my dad and one of the sheep-herders, out to look for me. Wasn’t I glad to see them, though! But I didn’t feel real safe till we

three was in our log cabin, with the door bolted and barred.”

“Oh-h!” said Rosamond Wright with a shudder. “How glad I am there are no wolves around the log cabin now!”

While Grandpa Dally had been telling this story there had been a quiet bustling in the cottage kitchen, and suddenly the door opened and in came Kate and Mrs. Doring, bearing the good things to eat.

Granny Dorset’s chair was drawn up to the table and soon the merry feast began.

“A good old-fashioned chicken dinner,” Mrs. Quigley said with appreciation. “And pumpkin pie!” Grandpa Dally added with a chuckle.

“It’s a good while since I ate any home cookin’,” Mr. Quigley remarked. “I tell you, folks, there’s nothin’ like a home, whether it’s for cookin’ or just livin’ in,” he added wistfully, and every one knew that he was thinking of the poorhouse.

Then Miss Grackle impulsively exclaimed, “Dan Quigley, you seem about as

strong as ever. I should think that you could get gardening to do.”

“I’ve tried, Sally, but all the farmers say I’m too old,” Mr. Quigley replied.

“You are too old for hard farming, I agree,” Miss Grackle said, “but maybe there is some one who has a garden and grounds to be cared for, where you could work when you felt like it and rest when you were tired.”

“I wish there was such a place,” the old man said sadly, “but there ain’t.”

“Yes, there is, too,” Miss Grackle exclaimed. “I want this place of mine fixed up the way it was when father was alive, and I want you and Mrs. Quigley to come and live in this cottage and take care of it for me.”

Mrs. Quigley’s eyes were shining. “Pa Quigley,” she said, “I always told you the dear Lord would send one of His angels to deliver us from the poorhouse, if it was right that we should be delivered.”

“And so He has!” Mr. Quigley said in

a shaking voice. “And Sally Grackle is that angel!”

How Miss Grackle longed to tell them that Adele Doring and her six friends were really the angels, but she had promised Adele that she would not. When at last the guests took their departure they left the happy old couple in a really, truly home.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

THE NEW PUPIL

THE Sunny Seven met under the elm-tree in the school-yard the following Monday, when a strange girl appeared with her books under her arm. She was elaborately dressed, and each black curl hung in its prim and proper place.

“That new girl knows that we’re watching her,” Betty Burd exclaimed, “and she’s trying to put on airs. Who is she, anyway?”

“I’m sure I don’t know, and I don’t want to,” Rosamond Wright declared.

“I know who she is,” Doris Drexel said. “Her father was an inn-keeper out west until a few months ago. He owned a mine that never had amounted to much, so he told dad. Then one morning he woke up

and found himself rich. After that his wife wanted to come east and live like folks, so they came. They have mints of money, dad says, and they have bought that beautiful Restwell estate out on the Lake Road. Father was asked there to dinner last night. Mother was, also, of course, but she declined, but dad is their banker and so he had to go. He said that the house is luxuriously furnished, but in very poor taste. Dad likes Mr. Green, but the wife boasts all the time of their great wealth, and tells what everything cost."

"What is the girl's name?" Adele asked.

Doris smiled. "Her name used to be plain Susie Green, but since they became rich, the mother thought Susie too common, and so they call her Susetta."

"How ridiculous!" Bertha exclaimed. "I suppose if my father gets rich, I will have to be called Berthetta."

"Well, then, let us hope that he never will," Doris replied. "Dad said that poor Mr. Green acted like a fish out of water all

the time. He hardly ate a mouthful at dinner, and afterward, when the two men were alone, Mr. Green said that he did wish they were out west again, where he could breathe. He said he felt smothered, with so much velvet around. Father was real sorry for him."

"Poor little Susie!" Adele said, as the last school-bell began to ring. "So much money will probably spoil her, but we must be kind to her and make her feel that she is welcome to our school."

"Oh, Adele, if that isn't just like you!" exclaimed Rosamond Wright. "For my part, I shall leave the snippy little thing quite alone."

At the recreation hour the girls trooped again into the school-yard, some romping about, and others sauntering in chattering groups. Susie Green, with a book in her hand, sat alone on the bench under the elm-tree.

Adele, leaving the six, walked over to the girl and said pleasantly, "Good morn-

ing, Susie. I know that you are a stranger, so, if you wish, I will introduce you to my friends.”

Susie tossed her head as she replied rather ungraciously, “My ma — I mean my mother — doesn’t wish me to make up with any children at this public school until I know what families they come from. She says I may meet Doris Drexel, because she is our banker’s daughter. My ma — I mean my mother — wanted to send me to a private school, but there ain’t, — I mean there isn’t, — any around here.”

Adele arose. “I am sorry that you feel that way, Susie,” she said kindly. “Our schoolmates are all nice, and I am afraid that you will be lonely alone.”

“Poor girl!” Adele said, as she rejoined her friends.

“Such airs!” Rosamond Wright declared with a toss of her pretty head. “An inn-keeper’s daughter, and she doesn’t want to meet us, whose ancestors have been gentry for hundreds of years.”

“Well,” exclaimed Bertha Angel, “let’s proceed to forget her.” But they were not allowed to forget the new pupil, as you shall hear.

About a week later the Sunny Seven met under the elm-tree early one morning, and Betty Burd held up a pink envelope, as she exclaimed, “Who else had the honor to receive one of these?”

“Honor, do you call it?” Rosamond asked languidly, as she displayed a pink envelope. “I have one, but I shall not accept.”

Adele and Gertrude and Doris also had them, but Bertha and Peggy had none. The pink envelopes contained invitations to a very *select* party to be given by Susetta Green on the following Saturday.

“I wasn’t select enough, because my father owns a grocery store, I suppose,” Bertha Angel declared.

“And my dad is also a tradesman, and so I am left out,” Peggy Pierce added with twinkling eyes. “But you other girls go,

and then you can tell us all about the party.”

“Go!” Doris Drexel exclaimed. “Indeed we will not go! I told Susie Green myself that we seven always went to places together, or we didn’t go at all. Do you suppose for one second, Peggy Pierce, that I would go to a party if you and Bertha were left out?”

And so it happened that Susetta Green received five notes of refusal to her party. She took them to her mother with tears in her eyes, as she said, “I told you, ma, that they wouldn’t none of them come unless you asked them all.”

Mrs. Green bristled indignantly. “Ask the daughters of tradespeople to a select party? Well, I should say not! With all our money, we ought to associate with earls and dukes.”

“But ma,” Susie dolefully replied, “there ain’t any earls and dukes, and I’m so lonely I’d just as soon play with the gardener’s children.”

Her mother looked at her scornfully. "Well," she said, "it's mighty queer those girls refused to come to your party. I looked up all their families and they're the best around, but your pa — that is, your father — has more money than all of them put together. Just you remember *that* when you go back to school, and hold your head high. What's more, I intend hiring a girl to be a maid for you, and then, when you're older, you shall have a French maid."

That very afternoon Mrs. Melissa Green, with Susetta at her side, drove in their handsome carriage down the country road. There was a coachman and a footman dressed in green livery, with brass buttons, sitting stiffly on the high front seat, and Mrs. Melissa Green, elaborately dressed in purple satin, felt that they must be making a very grand appearance.

"Where are we going, ma?" Susie asked.

"I do wish you wouldn't say 'ma' any more, nor 'pa', neither," Mrs. Green said

irritably. “ ’Tain’t stylish! Say ‘father’ and ‘mother.’ We’re going to visit the orphan asylum. Folks with money, like us, ought to be doing something for charity. That’s the way to get a start in society, so I’ve heard tell.”

Susetta Green thought that was a queer reason for doing good, but, wisely, she said nothing about it. What she did say, after a few moments of thoughtful silence, was: “Ma — I mean mother — I almost wish that we had never made any money. I’d heaps rather be riding bareback on my cow-pony out west than be sitting here so stiff in this grand carriage.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Green scornfully, “if I had any such common wishes, I’d keep them to myself. Land sakes, don’t let the servants hear you talk that way.”

Soon the elegant equipage stopped in front of the orphanage. The footman sprang to open the carriage-door, and Mrs. Green stepped down, with what she believed to be a queenly air. Susie, looking

anything but happy, followed her up the gravelly walk.

Eva and Amanda, standing at the sewing-room window, saw them, and Amanda said, "Some rich woman, I guess, who is coming to offer a home to one of the orphans."

"Maybe so," Eva replied, giving the matter little thought, but she was to give it very serious thought before another hour had passed.

When Mrs. Melissa Green, with Susetta at her side, entered the orphanage, the kindly matron, Mrs. Friend, welcomed them pleasantly and led them to her office. The visitor at once began to state her errand, while Susetta watched her and listened with wide, wondering eyes.

"I am Mrs. Cyrus Green of the Restwell estate," the newcomer began in a condescending manner, which she deemed proper for the very rich to use toward persons who were working for pay. Mrs. Green tried to forget that a very few months before

she herself had been serving guests in her husband's tavern, and she sincerely hoped that no one else knew about it. Unfortunately for her, every one in town did know about it, because simple Mr. Green often mentioned the tavern which he used to keep, and the men liked him all the better for it.

“I am glad to meet you, Mrs. Green,” the matron said pleasantly, not at all impressed by the grand airs. “I had heard that a Western family had purchased the Restwell estate. That fine old house has been closed for so long that we are indeed glad to have it opened again. The former owner, the elderly Mr. Restwell, was greatly loved in the village and gave generously to all of the charities.”

Mrs. Cyrus Green cared nothing about the former owners, the present owner occupying all of her thoughts. “Well,” she said pompously, “I do feel that we people who have great wealth ought to do something for the folks who 'ain't got it, and that is why I came here this morning. I

want to hire one of your older orphans to be a sort of companion for Susetta here. I understand that you hire them out after they're twelve."

"No, Mrs. Green," the matron replied. "We do not permit our girls to work for wages until they are fourteen, but we are glad to find pleasant homes for them at any age, — homes in which they will be kindly treated, and where they will receive greater advantages than we can afford to give them."

Mrs. Green did not look pleased. "Well," she replied stiffly, "I wasn't planning to adopt a common orphan to share equal with my Susetta, but I will take one for a time, if I find one that's suitable."

Mrs. Friend arose as she said, "I will call together our older girls, and you may make their acquaintance."

Stepping into the hall, she rang three times on the gong. In the sewing-room Eva looked up from the hem which she was stitching, and aloud she counted, "One!

Two! Three!” Then, rising and folding her work, she said, “Come, Mandy; three bells means that we older girls are to go to the study-hall. I wonder why.”

“It’s just what I told you,” Amanda declared. “That rich woman has come to adopt an orphan. I’m so ugly-looking that I’m sure she won’t choose me, and if she takes you, Eva, I’ll just die of lonesomeness.”

Twelve orphan girls gathered in the study, and together they curtsied to the strangers when the matron introduced them. Then Mrs. Green lifted a lorgnette to her eyes, though she could see perfectly well without glasses, and, walking down the line, she examined each girl as a man might a horse or a dog which he was about to purchase.

Eva blushed as crimson as a poppy while she was being scrutinized, and unconsciously drew herself up proudly and held her head high.

As soon as possible Mrs. Friend dis-

missed the girls, and the trio returned to the office.

“Well,” said Mrs. Green, “there’s no use settin’ down again. I’ve made my choice. I pick the slender one with yellow hair. She looks rather uncommon. Eva, I think you called her. I don’t want no orphan who had common parents to live with my Susetta.”

Mrs. Friend was about to protest that she could not possibly spare Eva, but just in time she remembered that the orphanage was greatly in need of funds, and she knew that it would not do to offend this rich woman who might contribute largely in the future, and so, with a sad heart, Mrs. Friend said, “Eva Dearman is a very lovely girl and comes of a fine old family. I am sorry indeed to part with her, but I am sure that you will do much to make her happy.”

Making the orphan happy had not been a part of Mrs. Green’s scheme. She merely wanted a maid and companion for Susetta,

and so she replied rather coldly, "I guess any girl would consider it an honor to live in an elegant house like ours after this here orphanage. I will send for her to-morrow." Then the woman was gone, Susetta meekly following her.

Mrs. Friend watched them go with a heavy heart. How she dreaded telling poor Eva! Then suddenly her face brightened. That very afternoon there was to be a meeting of the directors of the orphanage. Perhaps they would decide that Eva need not go after all. At least, she would not tell the little girl whom she so dearly loved, until the matter was definitely settled.

Meanwhile, Eva and Amanda, hand in hand, had wandered over to the woods. "It's such a lovely day," Eva declared, "I feel as though I wanted to dance and sing, don't you, Amanda?"

The other girl shook her head. "No, I don't!" she said. "I feel just as though some terrible thing was going to happen.

It's that dreadful woman makes me feel that way, I guess."

Eva laughed gayly. "Well, Mandy," she replied merrily, "if a dreadful calamity does come, you and I must try to look on the sunny side of it."

Whether or not the calamity came, you shall soon know.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

EVA BEGINS A NEW LIFE

THE board of directors met at the appointed hour, and as soon as the regular business was disposed of, Mrs. Friend told the story of Mrs. Green's visit, and ended by asking permission to refuse to permit Eva to leave the orphanage.

The matter was discussed, but it was finally decided that it would be very unwise to offend so wealthy a possible patron as Mrs. Cyrus Green. "Let the child go for a while," said one, "and perhaps later a way will be found to recall her."

And with that decision Mrs. Friend had to be content. Late that afternoon, as Eva and Amanda were walking arm in arm about the garden, a little girl ran out to

them and called, "Eva Dearman, Mrs. Friend wants to see you in the office right away quick. I guess something awful has happened, she looks so sad."

Amanda clung to her friend. "I knew it," she almost sobbed. "That dreadful woman chose you. I knew she was going to by the way she looked at you. Oh, Eva, you'll be so unhappy there. Why couldn't she have chosen me?"

Eva released herself from her friend's embrace and said tenderly, "Why should you suffer for me? You would be just as unhappy at Mrs. Green's as I should. But don't cry, Mandy. It may not be so very dreadful after all." Then she turned and went into the house.

Eva's face was very pale when Mrs. Friend looked up and saw her standing in the doorway. The matron put her arms about her and held her close, as a mother would, and then she said, "Eva, dear, you don't know how I dread telling you."

But the girl smiled bravely as she re-

plied: "I know what it is! Mrs. Friend, you have been so kind to me. No one but my own mother was ever so kind, and I know that if you could have prevented this, you would have done so."

"I have not given up hope yet, Eva," the matron replied. "If you will go for a time, I will try in every way to have you recalled as soon as possible. Dear," she added, looking tenderly at the girl, "are you *sure* that you have no living relative?"

Eva shook her head sadly. "There is no one," she said. "Father had only one brother, and mother was the last of her family."

"What became of your father's brother, Eva? Did he die, also?" the matron asked.

"Yes, he is dead," Eva replied. "Uncle Dick went west when he was a mere lad, because he was so eager for adventure, and for several years he wrote to my father from different places. At last he seemed to settle down to one, and he wrote that he was having an interesting life and making

money. Then, for a long time, father did not hear, and at last a letter which he had written was returned to him unopened, and on the outside was scrawled, 'Dick Dearman was killed in an Indian raid, leastwise it is supposed so.' After that father wrote time and again, but his letters always came back. All this happened before father married my mother."

"Did you ever hear how your father addressed those letters, Eva?" the matron inquired.

"To Dry Creek, Arizona," the girl replied. And then she asked, "When am I to go to Mrs. Green's?"

"To-morrow," the matron replied sadly.

"Very well. Good-night, Mrs. Friend," the girl said so quietly that the matron thought that perhaps she did not mind going so much after all; but if she could have seen the lonely motherless girl a few moments later, she would have known how cruelly hard this new experience was for her.

Eva did not return to the garden, but, instead, she ran up to the dormitory, and throwing herself upon the bed, sobbed as though her heart would break. Then, slipping to her knees, she held her dear mother's picture, and prayed for strength to bear this heavy cross bravely and cheerfully, as that dear mother had taught her.

After a time peace crept into the heart of the girl, and she seemed to know that in some way all was well. By the time that the other orphans came into the dormitory for the night, Eva was able to meet them smilingly; and since most of them believed that she had been greatly honored to have been the choice of the rich woman, they little dreamed of the hour of suffering which she had just passed through.

When Eva awoke the next morning, it was with the feeling that something unusual was going to happen. She looked out at the bare tree-tops in the orchard and at the gray autumn sky, and then she remembered, and for a moment her heart

sank within her. But suddenly the sun burst through a rift in the clouds, and the world was bright again.

Eva sprang up to dress, as she thought bravely: "Maybe the sun will shine through my clouds. Anyway, if I pretend that going to Mrs. Green's is something that I very much want to do, it will make it seem easier, and, as Adele says, every cloud has a sunny side, even if it is very hard to see just at first."

Mrs. Friend glanced anxiously at Eva when she entered the dining-room that morning, her arm linked through Amanda's, but the bright smile of greeting dispelled the matron's fear that she might have cried all night.

"What a dear, brave girl she is!" Mrs. Friend thought, and she strengthened her resolve to leave no stone unturned in her effort to have Eva recalled.

After breakfast Eva went to the dormitory to pack her few belongings, and Amanda was with her.

“I feel just like crying,” Amanda said, “but when I see how brave you are, it makes me feel ashamed of myself, for even living here with orphans won’t be so bad as living with that dreadful woman. Do you suppose that you are to be sent to school with that prig of a girl?”

“No,” Eva replied. “Mrs. Friend told me that Susetta is to have a tutor come from the city each day, and I suppose I am to have lessons with her.”

Poor little Eva little dreamed that educating the orphan was not in Mrs. Green’s scheme.

Few were the girl’s belongings, and those were soon packed in a satchel which had belonged to her father. Lovingly Eva touched it, and it was hard for her to keep back the tears when she remembered the big, fine man who had owned it. How sad he would be if he knew that his only little girl — But she put the thought away from her and smiled brightly up at her friend. It would not do for her to be re-

calling the once happy home and the two who had so loved her.

“Amanda,” she said, trying to speak cheerily, “would you like to wear my blue ring while I am away? Maybe it would be sort of company for you.”

Amanda choked as she replied: “Oh, Eva, I’d be so glad to wear it. Maybe it would help me to be brave, the way you are. I’ll just look at the ring and remember that you love me, and then I won’t care so much if the other girls are mean.”

“There!” Eva announced as she snapped the clasp of the satchel. “My wardrobe is packed and I am ready to depart for my future palatial residence at Restwell.” Then she laughingly added, as she caught hold of her friend and swung her around: “Amanda, do smile! You look as though you were at a funeral. Really, now, things might be ever so much worse. I might be going miles and miles away from you, but, as it is, I shall be near enough to run over and see you often.”

At that moment a small girl put her head in the dormitory-door and called excitedly: "Eva! Eva Dearman! Are you here? There's the grandest kerridge come to get you. My, don't I envy you though! Wouldn't I like to be leavin' this dismal old orphans' home and going to live in a castle, like as not, where there's servants with gold buttons to wait on you."

Eva hurriedly put on her hat and coat, and then, kissing her friend, she whispered: "Don't cry, Amanda. Somehow I feel sure that something ever so nice is going to happen soon for both of us. I can't think what it will be, but I feel it in my bones, and you can't guess what good prophets my bones are," she added merrily as they started down the stairs.

Mrs. Friend was waiting in the hall, and she and Amanda walked out to the gate with Eva, Amanda carrying the satchel, as she would gladly have carried all of her friend's burdens if only she could.

A liveried footman helped Eva into the

carriage, to the envy of all the orphans, who were watching from the windows of the Home.

“My, but ain’t she a lucky girl!” said Jenny Waine to her neighbor.

“For my part,” Sally West replied, “I can’t see why that rich woman would choose such a pale, skinny girl. You’re much prettier, with your red cheeks and black eyes.”

“Well, I’m thinking they won’t keep her long,” Jenny replied, with a toss of her head which set her raven curls to bobbing, “and then maybe one of us will get the next chance.”

Meanwhile Eva, seated upon the luxurious purple cushions, leaned back comfortably as she thought, “I’m just going to enjoy every pleasant thing that comes along and not worry about the future.”

This was a wise decision, but Eva did not find many things to enjoy during the next few weeks.

CHAPTER THIRTY

EVA HUMILIATED

THE spirited horses soon turned in between two high stone gate-posts, on the top of which two stone lions were crouching. The wide lawns were beautifully kept, and bright-colored autumn flowers flamed in the neat beds. Over a smooth, wide drive the carriage rolled with its small occupant. It did not stop at the front of the house, but went around to the servants' entrance, and there a maid, in cap and apron, met Eva and led her up the back-stairs to a small room which she said was next to her own.

When Eva had been left alone, she stood very still, looking about her at the plain furnishings, and then it slowly dawned

upon her that, instead of being there as an equal and a companion for Susetta, she was to be classed as a servant. Hot tears rushed to her eyes, but she tried to console herself with the thought that it would not be for long; it could not be. Mrs. Friend would not permit it. And Adele, what would Adele say?

There was a rustle in the doorway, and there stood Mrs. Green in an elaborate rose-colored house-dress.

“I see you’ve come,” she said without a word of greeting. “Here’s a black dress I want you to wear, and — er — a cap and apron. I like to have all the — er — helpers around the house dressed alike. Folks who have great wealth ought to do things stylish.”

“So they should, Mrs. Green,” Eva replied politely.

“Your duties,” Mrs. Green continued, “will be to look after Miss Susetta’s room, and to mend her clothes, and to ride out with her when I am not able to go. I hope

that you speak English right. I don't want no one who talks ignorant associatin' with my daughter, and me a-paying out a lot of money for a tutor to come down from the city to teach her."

"I will try to speak correctly," Eva said, feeling as though she was taking a part in a play, everything seemed so unreal and unnatural.

"When you are dressed, you may come to my room, which is at the front of the second-floor hall." So saying Mrs. Green, elephantine in her loose rose-colored house-dress, walked away, and Eva actually laughed to herself as she made the change. Being able to see the humorous side of a thing saves many a needless heartache.

Half an hour later she rapped lightly on a closed door on the second-floor front and was bidden to enter.

Susetta was there, and she jumped up, crying joyfully, "Oh, Eva, I'm so glad you have come! How I have wanted a girl of my own age to —"

But she got no farther, for her mother, with a frown, said reprovingly, "Susetta, didn't I tell you never to speak familiar, like that, to — er — the helpers?" Then, turning to Eva, she said, "Yonder is some mending in a basket. You may begin on that."

Eva sat in a low rocker by a side-window and began to mend the muslin garments. She liked to sew, and she dearly loved lacy things, so she was rather enjoying her task. Susetta pouted, but obediently returned to her seat at the front window. Picking up her book, she tried to read, but, not being interested, she often looked listlessly down on the park-like grounds. Suddenly she gave an exclamation of pleasure. "Oh, ma! ma! Do look!" she cried excitedly. "There's the banker's daughter, and the Doring girl in her pony-cart. They're coming to call on me."

Mrs. Green peered out between the curtains as she replied, "I told you they'd come fast enough when they found out how

rich we are. I'm glad it's that Doring girl. Her folks belong to one of the oldest families around, and her grandpa owned 'most all of the land in the town. Those two girls are just the ones that I want you to know."

There came a rap on the door, and a maid entered and announced, "Miss Doring and Miss Drexel to call upon Miss Eva Dearman."

A deep red mounted to Mrs. Green's brow, and she replied angrily, "Just tell them, if you please, that I do not let my servants have company except on certain days, and that Eva Dearman's day hasn't been picked out yet. What's more, tell them that the servants' friends go to the side-door."

Mrs. Green was so angry that she hardly knew what she was saying. Eva's cheeks flushed, and for a second she felt inclined to resent what had been said, but wisely she decided to say nothing.

The maid delivered the message which

Mrs. Green had sent, and the girls were very indignant.

“Poor Eva!” Adele said as they were driving away. “If I only had known that she was to be sent to Mrs. Green’s. I didn’t know a thing about it until I telephoned to Mrs. Friend an hour ago. But she won’t have to endure this humiliation much longer. My mother loves Eva, and she will gladly invite her to visit us indefinitely.”

When Adele reached home she ran into the house, and, pausing in the lower hall, she called, “Mumsie, where are you?”

“In the library, dear,” a sweet voice replied. And Adele, flushed and excited, went in and sank down on the stool at her mother’s feet as she exclaimed, “Oh, mumsie, I am so mad! I never was madder, I guess, in all my days. I’ve tried and tried to think kind things about that horrid Mrs. Green, but I just can’t, no matter how hard I try.”

“Mrs. Green!” the mother repeated

wonderingly. "Why, pet, what have you to do with her?"

Then in a rush of words Adele told the whole story. Mrs. Doring, who truly loved Eva, was surprised that the matron of the Home had allowed her to be so humiliated. "I will telephone to Mrs. Friend at once," she said, as she arose and went into Mr. Doring's small study.

The matron of the orphanage was also very indignant when she heard that Eva was being treated as a servant.

"Mrs. Doring," she said over the wire, "I sincerely hope that you do not think that I had any knowledge that such was to be the case. Mrs. Green told me that she wished Eva to be a companion for Susetta, and when I asked her in what manner the orphan would be able to continue her studies, Mrs. Green replied that she had engaged a tutor to come from the city each day, and she inferred, if she did not directly say, that Eva would have lessons with Susetta. Eva is one of the dearest girls I

have ever known, and I did my best to prevent her going, but the directors, knowing that the orphanage is much overcrowded, felt that it is best to find homes for the girls as soon as possible, and, moreover, they did not wish to offend Mrs. Green, who is a rich woman and might contribute liberally, and the home is greatly in need of funds.”

“But surely Eva ought not to be sacrificed,” Mrs. Doring replied. “Couldn’t you send one of the other girls who has not so sensitive a nature?”

“Unfortunately, Eva was Mrs. Green’s choice,” the matron said sadly.

“Suppose, then, that I take Eva,” Mrs. Doring continued. “I will do so gladly. In fact, Mr. Doring and I were recently considering the matter, and had almost decided to ask Eva to become our adopted daughter and a sister for Adele. The two girls love each other so dearly that I am sure that it would be a very happy arrangement.”

“It would, indeed,” Mrs. Friend replied, “and I will lay the matter before the board of directors at their next meeting, which, unfortunately, will not be for another fortnight. Until that time I shall be powerless to act in the matter.”

When Mrs. Doring returned to the library, Adele threw her arms about her and cried joyfully, “Oh, mumsie, I heard what you said about adopting Eva. How wonderful that would be! When can she come? May I drive over and get her this very moment? I can’t bear to have her spend a single night under the same roof with those horrid people.”

“Adele, dear,” her mother said gently, “calling names won’t help Eva. Mrs. Green has had few opportunities. If she had had the advantages that we have had, perhaps she would be different. We must remember that.”

“Very well, mumsie,” Adele said contritely. “I’ll try not to think unkindly of Mrs. Green any more. I’ll try not to think

of her at all, but please do tell me when I may go after my dear sister Eva."

Then Mrs. Doring told all that the matron had said. "Oh-h!" Adele sighed. "Then poor Eva must stay there for two long weeks. Well, at least I will telephone to her and tell her that we are trying to get her out of her prison."

A moment later Adele emerged from her father's study, looking very unlike her cheerful self. Mrs. Doring put one arm about the girl, as she laughingly exclaimed, "Well, little Miss Thunder-cloud, what happened?"

"I called up Restwell," Adele began, "and I asked if I might speak to Eva Dearman. The butler, I suppose it was, replied, and he said the servants were not allowed to use the 'phone. Now, how can I let Eva know? She may fret herself ill."

"Eva has a brave, noble nature, and I am sure that she will cheerfully make the best of things, and, Della, two weeks will quickly pass, and after that we will do all

that we can to make up for the unhappy year that Eva has had.”

However, before the fortnight was over, something very unexpected happened.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED

THE days dragged slowly by for both Eva and Adele. Mrs. Green had been so angry because the daughters of the two best families in town had called upon her servant instead of upon her daughter, that she tried ever after to humiliate the girl, as though in some way it had been her fault.

Once only did Adele catch sight of Eva, and that was when the orphan was sitting beside Susetta in a handsome carriage, which was being slowly driven down the main street of the village. Susetta was elaborately dressed in a ruffled pale-blue silk, which was partly covered with a mantle of fluffy white furs. Her pale-blue hat was also fur-trimmed. Eva Dearman,

by contrast, was dressed like a maid, in black, with white cap and apron. This was the first time that the orphan had been publicly humiliated, and her face looked very white as Adele passed on her pony.

“Good morning, Eva,” Adele called. A faint smile was the only reply that she received, but Susetta tossed her head angrily. She was imbibing more of her mother’s spirit every day.

Adele, who had intended to call upon Amanda at the orphanage, was so indignant at Eva’s public humiliation that she whirled her pony around and galloped home as fast as Firefly could go. She found her mother in the sewing-room. “Oh, mumsie!” she sobbed as she threw her arms about Mrs. Doring. “I can’t stand it! I won’t stand it!”

“Can’t stand what, pet?” her mother asked, as she smoothed the girl’s hair.

Then Adele told what she had seen, and she added, “Eva’s family was just as good as ours, or anybody’s, and she is so sensi-

tive. I could tell by her white face that she was suffering cruelly, but she held her head high, and, oh, mumsie, for all the difference in clothes, any one could tell that Eva was the real lady.”

“Of course, dear,” Mrs. Doring replied. “It is not the work that we do nor the clothes that we wear, but just what we are, that makes us gentlewomen. But do not grieve so, Adele. Just think, in four days we shall have Eva here with us, and after that we will do all that we can to make her happy.”

“Well,” Adele said with a sigh, as she picked up her riding-hat, “if there is nothing that I can do about it, I might as well go over and see Amanda Brown. She is so lonely with Eva away.”

As Adele neared the orphanage, she saw the station-wagon stopping near the gate. “More orphans being brought to the Home, I suppose,” she thought, but instead, a man alighted and bade the driver wait. The stranger was about forty-five years of

age, dressed in typical western style, and as he glanced at the girl, she saw that his weather-browned face was good-looking and kindly. Adele dismounted, and, tossing Firefly's reins over a hitching-post, started up the gravelly walk, just back of the stranger. He turned and smiled pleasantly at her, as he asked, "Am I right in believing that this is the county orphanage?"

"Yes, it is," Adele replied, walking beside him.

"Do you happen to know if this is where my niece, Eva Dearman, is staying?"

If the skies had opened and an angel had appeared to deliver Eva, Adele could not have been more surprised.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, scarcely able to believe what she had heard. "Are you really her uncle? Can it be true that poor Eva has an own relation?"

"Why do you call my niece 'poor'?" the stranger asked with evident concern. "Is she ill or in trouble?"

Then Adele told the whole story. The face of Richard Dearman showed deep feeling as he listened, and then he said almost brokenly, "To think of my brother's little girl enduring such humiliation!"

Then he strode to the orphanage door and inquired for Mrs. Friend. The matron was out and was not expected back for two hours.

The man then turned to Adele, as he asked, "Young lady, will you take me to the place where my niece is being treated like a servant?"

"Indeed I will, gladly," Adele replied, and soon they were on the road, Richard Dearman in the station-wagon, and Adele riding alongside on Firefly.

Meanwhile Eva, sad and weary, was on her knees, cleaning the hardwood floor in Susetta's room. Little did she dream of the great joy that was coming to her.

When they reached the imposing entrance to the Restwell estate, Adele bade Mr. Dearman good-by, believing that he

would rather meet his niece alone. Just as the station-wagon stopped at the broad front steps, the door of the house opened, and a short man, with reddish complexion, hurried down. Mr. Dearman was at that moment alighting from the wagon, and the two men met face to face. There was an exclamation of pleased surprise from Mr. Green, as he hurried forward and extended his hand.

“Well, Dick Dearman!” he cried. “Whatever are you doing so far from the Woolly West? I swan, I never was so glad to see anybody! I’m sure tired of these Eastern dudes. The men are decent enough, you understand, but somehow they are different. Mighty good of you, Dick, to hunt us up.”

Before the visitor had time to explain the truth concerning his errand, the door opened again, and this time Mrs. Green, in her rose-colored house-dress, appeared, and Mr. Green called, “Melissy, do see who is here. Dick Dearman, the Cattle

King of Silver Creek, has come to visit us.”

“How do you do, Mrs. Green,” the new-comer said. “I heard that you had given up the tavern business and had come east, but I did not dream that it was you with whom my niece, Eva Dearman, is staying.”

For a moment the face of Mrs. Green became very white and her eyes looked frightened. She had understood, from what the matron of the Home had told her, that Eva had no living relation, and now she suddenly found that Eva had an uncle, who was a man of wealth and influence in the West. What would he say if he knew how unkind she had been to the girl? But he must not know. She thought quickly, and aloud she exclaimed with pretended pleasure, “Well, now, is it possible that you are the uncle of our dear Eva? I didn’t suppose that she had any own folks, and I was so taken with her sweet face, when I was over at the orphanage, that I asked the matron to let her come and live with us, and be a sister to our lonely little girl.”

Mr. Dearman knew that this was not the truth, but he replied with extreme politeness. "You were indeed kind to take so much trouble to make my niece happy, but, as you may surmise, I am very eager to see my brother's little girl; that is, if she is here."

Mrs. Green knew very well that at that moment Eva was cleaning Susetta's room, but she answered evasively, "I'm not sure that the girls have come home as yet. It was such a lovely day, I sent them for a drive."

Then, turning to Mr. Green, she said: "Pa, you take Mr. Dearman into the library and I'll see if I can find Eva. How pleased the dear child will be!"

Then the flustered woman hurried away. When the two men were in the library, Mr. Green excused himself, saying that he had an engagement with his banker, but that he would see their visitor at luncheon. Then he, too, departed, leaving Mr. Dearman alone.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Green had hastened to her daughter's room. It was in perfect order, and Susetta, curled in a chair, was reading a book. The orphan was not there.

“Wherever is Eva Dearman?” Mrs. Green asked in such an excited tone of voice that Susetta looked up in surprise and inquired, “What’s wrong, ma?”

“Wrong? Everything’s wrong!” her mother replied. “Here we’ve been treating that orphan like a servant, and her uncle has just come for her, and he’s richer than your own pa even, and what would he say if he knew how we’d been treating the girl? But he mustn’t know! Susetta, find Eva at once and dress her up in some of your fine clothes and tell her that we didn’t intend to have her for a servant any longer. Tell her I was a-going to adopt her and have her for your sister.”

Then it was that something in Susetta which was like her blunt, honest father, awoke, and her eyes flashed as she replied,

“I won’t tell Eva any such thing, ma, because it’s a lie.”

The mother cowed before her daughter’s reproof, and then hurried down the hall to see if Eva was in her room, but she was not there. The girl had gone down-stairs to replace the cleaning utensils in the kitchen-closet. She was about to return to her room when the parlor-maid appeared with a vase of flowers.

“Oh, Eva,” she said, “won’t you please take these into the library? I have so much to do, I will never get through.”

Eva, always willing to oblige, took the cut-glass vase with its bouquet of sweet pink roses and went toward the library, little dreaming that her very own uncle was waiting in there.

The girl had one hand on the silk plush portières, and was about to push them back, when she heard her name called softly from above.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

A HAPPY MEETING

EVA paused and looked up the broad stairway. At the top stood Mrs. Green, frantically beckoning to her.

“Eva,” the woman called in a stage whisper, “don’t go into the library. Come here, quick!”

The girl, puzzled indeed, was about to obey, when the portières parted and a tall, good-looking man appeared. He had been examining a painting near the doorway and had plainly heard the excited stage-whisper, the meaning of which he had easily interpreted.

Eva stepped back in surprise when she beheld the stranger, and, placing the vase of flowers on a near-by table, was about to

hasten away, when the man stepped in front of her and held out both his hands. Eva, glancing at his face, saw in it an expression of love and tenderness such as she had not seen for many months. What could it mean? Then the stranger spoke. "Eva," he said, "I am your Uncle Dick. Mrs. Friend wrote to me and —" But before he could say another word, the girl had thrown her arms about his neck, and was clinging to him as though she never meant to let him go again.

"Oh, Uncle Dick! Uncle Dick!" she sobbed. "Take me away from here! Please take me away! I've tried so hard to be brave, truly I have, but I've been so miserably lonesome without father or mother or any own folks to love me. How good it was of God to send you to me!"

There were tears also in the eyes of the strong man as he held the slender girl in a close embrace.

Meanwhile Mrs. Green, when she saw that the meeting was inevitable, had dis-

appeared into her own room and locked the door. She did not care even to face her daughter just then. Soon she heard the front-door close, and, peering between the window-curtains, she saw the station-wagon roll away, and she was indeed glad that Mr. Dearman was taking Eva without further ado. The girl, she noted, was dressed as she had been when she came from the orphanage, and her own belongings were in the satchel which had been her father's.

Adele, having galloped home at top speed, had told the wonderful news to her mother.

"Of course I am sorry to lose my new sister," she ended, "but it never would have been the same as own folks for Eva. And, just think of it, mumsie, her very own uncle has come for her and is going to take her back west with him."

"I am so glad for the poor child," Mrs. Doring replied. "And now, Adele," she added, "suppose you ride back and invite

Eva and her uncle to come here and stay until they leave for the west.”

“Oh, mumsie,” the girl cried with shining eyes, as she gave her mother a bear-hug. “What nice things you do think of! I will go at once, for I am sure they will not be long at Mrs. Green’s, and the hotel is such a dismal place.”

Once more the girl mounted Firefly and galloped up the Lake Road. Before long she saw the station-wagon approaching, and she waved her hat joyously.

“Here comes Adele!” Eva exclaimed, as she looked up at her uncle with shining eyes. Her face, which had been pale an hour before, was glowing with rosy color. “You just can’t think how kind she has been to me,” Eva continued. “She found me crying one day soon after I came to the orphanage, and she has been just like a sister to me ever since, haven’t you, Adele?” she asked gayly, as Firefly whirled around beside the carriage.

“Yes, I suppose so,” Adele replied, not

knowing in the least what her friend was talking about. "Oh, Eva!" she cried. "I'm so happy because now you have some own folks, and so is mumsie, and she sent me to ask you and your uncle to come to our house and stay until you go west."

"How nice that will be!" Eva exclaimed. "When are we going west, Uncle Dick?"

"Just as soon as I can arrange to get a section through to Chicago. Probably by to-morrow noon."

"Oh, so soon?" Adele asked dolefully, as she suddenly realized what losing Eva would mean to her. Mr. Dearman saw the troubled expression, and he was pleased to know that his niece had so good a friend, so he hastened to say, "Miss Adele, I do hope that you will be able to come west and make us a long visit. We have an attractive old ranch-house and I am sure that you would enjoy it, and, since you ride so well, perhaps you and Eva would like to be my cow-girls."

"Oh, wouldn't I love that life!" Adele

replied. "If mumsie will allow me to, I will visit you next vacation." Then she looked up anxiously as she asked, "Would that be too soon?"

"No, indeed!" laughed Uncle Dick. "The sooner the better. The ranch needs just such company."

Mrs. Doring was at the front gate to greet Eva, and she repeated the invitation which Adele had already given.

"Thank you, Mrs. Doring," Mr. Dearman replied. "My suit-case is at the hotel, and so I will remain there to-night, but I will gladly leave Eva with you until morning."

What a happy visit the two girls had that evening, as they sat in the pretty wild-rose room! "Adele," Eva exclaimed, as she put her arm about her friend, "I'm almost glad now that I was sent to the orphanage, for if I hadn't been I would never have known you, and I do love you just as much as I could if you were my very own sister, I do believe."

“And we’ll never, never lose each other, will we?” Adele replied.

“Of course not!” Eva exclaimed. “How could we? We’ll write letters often, and next summer you are to come to visit me. Your mother told Uncle Dick that she thought that you might, if some friend happened to be traveling west at that time.”

“Good!” Adele cried. “How I’d love to play cow-girl and dress in khaki, with a red handkerchief about my neck! Oh, Eva, won’t it be glorious to gallop across the desert trails?”

“It will be glorious to have you with me,” Eva replied, “but since I have never ridden horseback, I am not sure how much I shall enjoy that.”

“You’ll love it, I know,” Eva exclaimed. Then a tender light appeared in her eyes as she said, “Oh, Adele, just to think that I am going to have a real home with an own relative in it; and the best, the very best, of it is that Uncle Dick looks just as father did when he was younger. Why,

Adele, I'm so happy, so happy, that it seems as though those dreadful days at Mrs. Green's must have been just a dream." Then, taking Adele's hand, she added, "There is one request which I have to make, and that is, please be kind to poor Amanda."

"I promise," Adele replied. Then for a time the two girls, hand in hand, sat quietly in the gathering twilight, and then Eva said softly, "I'm thinking of my mother and of how happy she must be if she knows that at last her little girl is to have a real home and some one to love her."

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

FAREWELL TO THE ORPHANAGE

THE next morning the girls woke up early. Soon after breakfast the station-wagon appeared, and in it was Uncle Dick, who said that he would drive Eva over to the orphanage, that she might say good-by to the matron and to the orphans.

Mrs. Friend, they were told upon arriving, was with a sick child, but would be down as soon as possible.

“You wait here in the office, Uncle Dick,” Eva said, “and I will go and find poor Amanda.”

How Eva dreaded telling her friend that she was going away to the Far West, for well she knew how deep and sincere the girl's grief would be. It was Saturday

morning, and the orphans were busy about their tasks, Amanda, as usual, cleaning the study-hall. When the door opened, she looked up, and then, with an exclamation of joy, fairly flew across the room, and, throwing her arms about Eva, she cried: "Oh, you dear, dear Eva! Have you come back to stay? Please say that you have! I can't live here without you! I had made up my mind that if I couldn't be with you any more, I would run away."

"Oh, Mandy!" Eva exclaimed anxiously. "You mustn't run away! Promise me that you will not. Mrs. Friend is so kind, and — and, I can't stay with you, Mandy, because I am going far away to the West."

Then Eva drew her friend to a bench and told her the story of her uncle's coming.

"I'm so glad for you," Amanda said, and then, putting her head down on her friend's shoulder, she burst into a torrent of tears.

"Oh, Eva!" she sobbed. "Please don't think I am selfish enough to want you

to stay here now, but when I think that I am never, never to see you again, and there's *no one* else in the whole world whom I love, I guess it's more than I can bear."

"Do try to be brave, Mandy," Eva said, tears brimming her eyes. "I'll write to you every week, and Adele said that she would be a friend to you. She likes you, really she does. But come; I want you to meet my dear Uncle Dick."

Amanda dried her eyes and permitted her friend to lead her to the office. There she took Mr. Dearman's offered hand, and, looking up into his face with a pitiful expression, she said brokenly, "I'm so glad that Eva has an own relation."

Then the tears came with a rush, and the girl hurried out of the room. Going to the dormitory, she threw herself on her cot and sobbed and sobbed.

Eva looked at her uncle with brimming eyes. "I'm the only friend Amanda has," she said simply, and then she told the story of the lonely orphan's life. "It doesn't

seem right for me to go and leave her," Eva added sadly.

Then all of a sudden a bright smile lighted the face of Uncle Dick, and he exclaimed, "We won't leave her, Eva. We'll take her with us! The ranch-house is big, and it will be splendid for you to have a girl companion, for our nearest neighbor is eight miles away."

"Uncle Dick," Eva cried, scarcely able to believe her ears. "Do you really mean that? Truly, may Amanda go with us? Oh, you can't guess how happy she will be!"

Then Eva, entirely forgetting that Mrs. Friend ought first to be consulted, flew up-stairs to the dormitory, where she felt sure she would find the heart-broken orphan. "Amanda!" she called joyously. "Don't you cry another tear. Something wonderful has happened. Uncle Dick is going to take you, too. He suggested it all himself."

Amanda, springing to her feet, caught

her friend's hands as she exclaimed, "Eva Dearman, am I dreaming, or is it really true?"

"It's really true," the other replied. "And do hurry, dear, for we are to take the noon train."

Hastily Amanda washed, combed her hair, and donned her best blue alpaca dress, and then, all of a sudden, she thought of something. "Why, Eva," she said, "won't I have to ask Mrs. Friend if I may go?"

Before the other girl could reply, the matron herself appeared with such a bright smile that the girls knew that everything must be all right.

"Eva and Amanda!" she said as she kissed one and then the other. "I am so happy for you both. It is not customary to dismiss a child from the Home without the approval of the board of directors, but this time I myself will assume the responsibility."

A few moments later the station-wagon

drove away, and Eva and Amanda waved to the matron and her remaining children until they were out of sight. They were beginning a new life.

Adele, at the Doring gate, was surprised to see Amanda's shining face. Then, all at once, the truth dawned upon her, and, with a cry of joy, she ran forward and caught the orphan's hand as she stepped from the carriage. "Oh, Mandy!" she cried. "You are going, too. I just know that you are, and I'm so glad for you."

Mrs. Doring came out, and she, too, rejoiced to hear the wonderful good news. Then, turning to Mr. Dearman, she said: "I want you all three to come in and have a good dinner before you start on your journey. It is only eleven, two full hours before your train leaves. My son Jack is here, and he will take you to the station in our car."

Mr. Dearman, knowing that this had been planned to give Eva pleasure, readily consented, and, paying the driver of the

station-wagon generously, with a pleasant word he dismissed him.

Jack Doring was eager to meet this man from the West about whom he had heard so much.

Eva and Adele visited merrily as they ate the good dinner which Kate had prepared, but Amanda was so overcome with her new joy that she could hardly eat at all, but her black eyes were shining like stars at midnight. Mrs. Doring, noticing this, slipped out and asked Kate to put up a bountiful lunch that the girls might eat later on the train.

“Do tell that kind Madge Peterson all about our great good fortune,” Eva was saying to Adele. “She was so nice to us, and I am sure that she will be glad to hear about it. Tell her that I hope, some day, she will be in the West and that we may meet her again.”

“Eva,” Jack said solemnly, “here you are inviting everybody else to visit you and leaving me out. Haven’t I been nice to

you? Why, the very first evening I ever met you, I invited you to a fudge party.”

“So you did,” Eva laughingly replied. “And if it were my house, I would surely invite you to visit us when Adele comes next summer.”

“Then you may consider yourself invited, Master Jack,” Mr. Dearman exclaimed, “for Eva is going to be the mistress of the Bar-X Ranch, and she may invite there whomever she pleases. Indeed, we shall be able to find bunks for any number of young people.”

“If my sister goes West I surely ought to escort her,” Jack exclaimed, “and protect her from train-robbers and scalping Indians!”

“Oh-h!” sighed Adele. “It will be nine whole months before next summer. It doesn’t seem as though I could wait so long.”

“Time flies,” her mother smilingly assured her. “Before you realize it, you will be packing your trunk and buying a ticket

for — where, Mr. Dearman?” she inquired, turning to their guest.

“Douglas is the nearest station, although some of the trains stop at Silver Creek,” he replied. Then they all arose, and soon were seated in the big touring-car, with Jack driving them to the station.

Adele was almost as excited as were Eva and Amanda when the shrill whistle of the approaching engine was heard, and when the train slowed up and stopped, there were tears in their eyes as they kissed each other good-by, promising to write often.

“Oh, Adele,” Eva whispered in a last embrace. “You have been so good to me, and you will never know what it has meant, because you have not lost your mother.”

Then Uncle Dick helped the two girls into the car nearest, and they waved from the window while the train was slowly leaving the station.

Adele turned away with a sense of loneliness, but through her tears she saw her mother waiting for her, and, nestling close

to that loved one on the back seat of the car, she said softly, "Mumsie, dear, I feel as if I were living in a story-book, and that one chapter was finished, and now I am so eager to know what the next chapter will be."

If you are also interested, you can learn the "next chapter" by reading "Adele Doring on a Ranch."

THE END

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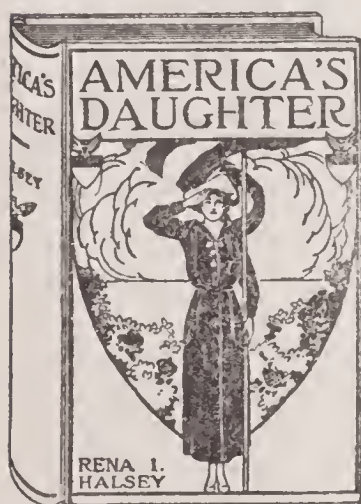
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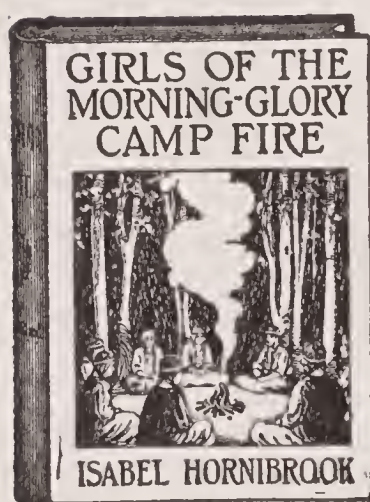
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Author of "Camp and Trail"

Illustrated in two colors by John Goss

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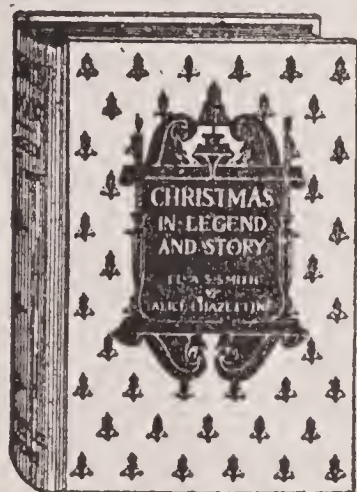
Compiled by **ELVA S. SMITH**

Cataloguer of Children's Books, Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh,

and **ALICE I. HAZELTINE**

Supervisor of Children's Work, St. Louis Public Library

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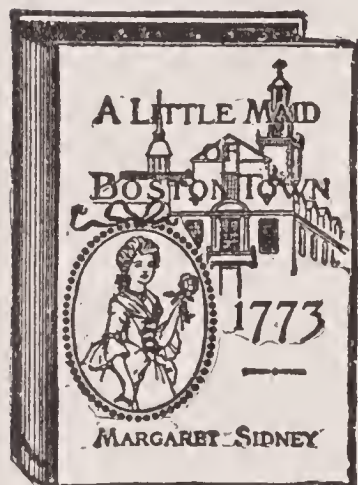
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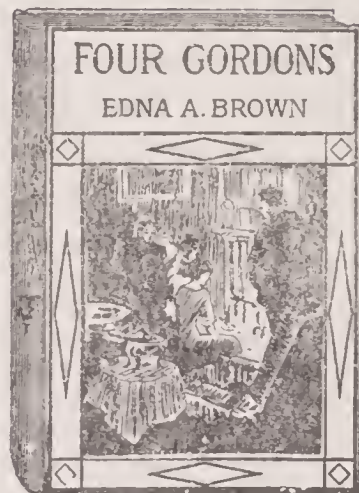
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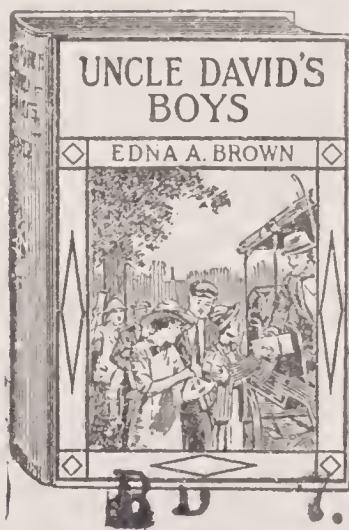


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